NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES
3 3433 08235061 6

Mercer, Mary

AN

# MEMOIR

OF

ASTOR LIBRARY
NEW-YORK.

# MISS MARGARET MERCER,

BY

CASPAR MORRIS, M. D.

"Nihil humani a mê alienum puto."

SECOND EDITION, WITH ADDITIONS.

PHILADELPHIA:
LINDSAY & BLAKISTON.
1848.

Entered, according to the Act of Congress, in the year 1847,

By Lindsay & Blakiston,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.

Wm. S. Young, Printer.

# PREFACE

TO

## THE SECOND EDITION.

The rapid sale of the first edition of this little work exhausting it within a few weeks, and the demand for the second, has afforded the most gratifying evidence to the editor, that he did not over estimate the worth of Miss Mercer, nor place an undue value upon the amount of good influence he hoped would result from the dissemination of the knowledge of the traits of sanctified character displayed in her letters, and the few incidents it was in his power to collect. As the contemplation of things beautiful and pure, not only enkindles in every bosom the wish to attain to beauty and purity, but produces the actual accomplishment of the desire it excites, it is important to present constantly to the minds of the young especially, such subjects as shall draw out aspirations after that "holiness, without

which no man shall see the Lord."—Piety could not be presented with a more attractive aspect, than that it wore in the character of Miss Mercer.

When the author first undertook the grateful task he has now accomplished, it was with the almost certain expectation, that abundant material would be furnished from the correspondence she was known to have maintained, with friends of congenial spirit, and pupils to whom she was attached with the warmest affection. In this he has been disappointed. Numerous letters he found had been destroyed at her own request. In other cases the persons to whom they were addressed, felt themselves restrained from furnishing them for publication by her known reluctance to subject her letters to the eyes of others, than those to whom they had been addressed. Some indeed that would have been especially interesting were destroyed by her own hand. Many still in existence are scattered in remote positions, inaccessible to the editor. The purity of her thought, the graceful ease, yet dignity of her style, render her letters even upon common subjects, interesting. But when she touches the keys which cause the deeper cords of the soul to vibrate, she brings forth such harmony as fills the heart with sensations kindred at least to

those we shall know in that higher state of existence to which she was ever tending with a steady flight. The following letter, taken from a packet received after the last sheet had gone to press, contains so much of the pure gold of consolation for the bereaved believer, wrought with a skill so exquisite, that the temptation to present it even here is irresistible. It was written while she was at Mrs. Garnett's school, at a time when the waves of affliction had passed heavily over her own soul, and was addressed to a relative suffering under a severe bereavement.

"How much, my precious cousin, have I wished, in your present affliction, that I could make it consistent with my engagements to be with you. How truly *have* I been with you in *spirit!* for I know that trusting perfectly, as you do, in the wisdom and goodness of our Father, yet, for the time, this expression of His will must be a grievous trial. I am consoled for your sufferings by the reflection that such events (in those who have true faith) always lead to a closer walk with God; and that you, whose thoughts have so long been employed in realizing the nature of our future Canaan and its dear delights will look upon your sainted Juliet as merely travel-

ling a stage before you, and being already watching anxiously for your arrival. Blessed land of promise! how joyful should be our pilgrimage here, after we have come within view of the shrine, and see the beloved spirits which are worshipping around it! Even now I behold a circle of my dearest earthly treasures, my best beloved friends, seated, like Mary, at the feet of Jesus—receiving the full tide of infinite and eternal wisdom from his lips.

But not like poor Mary's are the spiritual minds to which the blessed things of that third heaven are addressed. No veil of flesh clouds the perceptions of truth: and your dear Juliet, doubtless, looks back with unalloyed gratitude, to see that even the tears which now dim your eyes,—the pangs which now shake your feeble frame, are all means of purification, and are all completing the glorious work of sanctification which must be wrought in the children of the resurrection before they go hence.

Rejoice in suffering—how foolish, how enthusiastic to the worldling is this idea—and yet how clearly defined, how well founded, how rational, how honourable to God and consistent with long experience, is the Christian's profession of rejoicing in suffering, —seeing that the 'Captain of our salvation was per-

fected through suffering.' My beloved cousin, I rejoice with you in your sufferings. I thank my heavenly Father that neither you nor I have been left without chastening. Even now, in the third watch of the night, a little before that hour when the mourners went to be comforted at the tomb,—paying their last duties to the beloved *dead*, and receiving the glorious evidence of life and immortality in another state—now, when the whole earth, except the sick and sorrowing are buried in sleep—I have raised myself on my bed, to express to you, my dearly beloved friend, the sincere delight with which I reflect, that though Satan may bind you in the cords of human infirmity lo these many years,—yet Christ *has* wrought the miracle which is to make you straight." . . . . Sentiments more pure, language more appropriate, feelings more sublime, it were vain to seek. May they find their way to many a broken-hearted, bereft mother, and fill her with 'peace and joy in believing.'

Many incidents illustrative of her active benevolence have been narrated to the editor, but so involved with the feelings of living friends as to render it improper to detail them in print. Here they would add lustre to her crown of human praise.

Hereafter they will prove the truth of the declaration of Jesus himself, "They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of my Father."

Clinton Square,
February 18th, 1848.

# PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION.

It has not been with the design of magnifying the reputation of Miss Mercer, or heaping adulation on her memory for the gratification of surviving friends, that this memoir of her character has been prepared for the public. "By the grace of God" she was what she is here exhibited, whether we have regard to her natural endowment or subsequent spiritual attainment. As respects herself, her record is on high, and human praise or censure is of no account; and of her friends, but a few rapidly passing years will sweep away from this scene of existence all who could derive pleasure from the contemplation of her virtues, if regarded as belonging to herself alone, without looking to the source from whence they were derived.

But in the example of her whose character is here faintly delineated, we witness the actings of a spirit freely given to all men, according to their several necessities; under the influence of which each may attain to an equally faithful discharge of the duties belonging to the position to which they have been assigned. To every soul on the face of the earth the Creator of this earth, and the Originator of that

soul has committed a part in the working out of the great plan, for the accomplishment of which the whole has been devised; and in the faithful performance of this part consists the duty of that soul. The allotments are various, "all have not the same office;" each is responsible only for its own part. Yet "in all worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will."

It has been the aim of the editor, in preparing this little volume, to exhibit the principles by which Miss Mercer was influenced, and to prove, by her example, the sufficiency of those principles to direct in the path of duty, and to support under all trials which may be incident to it, in order thereby to direct others to the same source of consolation, by which her soul was sustained under trials so abounding, and to the same principle by which she was animated to efforts so great and persevering;—a principle so powerful as to enable her to declare in the midst of all her trials, that she found "more true enjoyment in the consciousness of the occupation of her powers in the service of her Redeemer, than she had ever known as the daughter of affluence, nurtured in the lap of indulgence."

In addition to this general object, it has been the special design to elevate in the estimation of the public, so far as the influence of this work may reach, the position of teacher. Various circumstances compel us to depute to others the task of

training the affections of the heart and developing the powers of the intellect of our offspring. This is the chief duty allotted to man, and he deserves well of his country who has trained a family of virtuous children, leading them through the temptations of youth, and starting them in the career of manhood with sound principles and well-established habits. How important then does it become that those to whom we intrust the entire or the supplementary care of our children should be themselves possessed of elevated principles, refined tastes, and correct habits. To secure the devotion of those possessed of these requirements, to this holy office, it is necessary that the office itself should be endowed with that respectability in the estimation of the public to which it is entitled; and nothing will more effectually secure this than the self-dedication of women such as Margaret Mercer to that high calling. Too often it has been undertaken from mere mercenary motives, with a view to the ultimate pecuniary advantage, or resorted to under the pressure of necessity, and pursued with unwilling effort, rather than holy zeal. Many in both classes have undoubtedly proved able teachers, and sent forth pupils well educated for the discharge of their duties in life. Miss Mercer had a higher aim: desiring not only to prepare her pupils for the life that now is, but to instil into them at the same time prinicples which should prepare them for glory and

honour and immortality in that which is to come; and to accomplish this purpose, she laboured with a degree of the same feeling which caused the apostle to regard himself as "debtor to Greek and barbarian." She thus magnified her office, and the desire to elevate it in the estimation of her sex, and to incite others to emulate her zeal, has been a prominent object in this work.

The subject which next to this most absorbed her attention and interested her feelings, was the condition of the negro race in this country. It will be found that on this she felt warmly and acted decidedly; and the attention of all interested is respectfully solicited to the exhibition of her views here made, in as succinct a manner as is compatible with the importance it possessed in her own mind. During the passage of these sheets through the press, a friend to whose inspection they were submitted, expressed the apprehension that they were too lenient to slavery. Others doubtless will regard them as intemperate in the denunciation of that institution. In this, as on every other point, the desire of the author has been to present himself as little as possible; but lest he should be misunderstood, he may be permitted to assert that, with the subject of the memoir herself, he can honestly adopt the language of the poet, and declare,

> "I had much rather be myself the slave,
> And wear the bonds, than fasten them on him."

# A MEMOIR

OF

# MISS MARGARET MERCER.

---

The family of Mercer is one of those scions of an ancient stock, which, transplanted to this country at an early period after its first colonization, has flourished with renewed vigour in its new soil, and added lustre here to the eminence it had acquired in its former location. In each succeeding generation it has possessed representatives who acted well their part, and left the impress of their character on the times in which they lived. It is needless here to enter into any detail of their history. The object in view is simply to prove that Miss Mercer sprang from no ignoble stem; and whether we look to the camp, the senate, or the social circle, in either sphere of action she could boast of distinguished progenitors, as well in Great Britain as in this country. Yet, to appropriate the language of the Bishop of Oxford, it was not for gentle alliance that Margaret Mercer was the most remarkable and best

deserves remembrance. Rather did she add distinction to her honourable line, and transmit to her kindred of succeeding generations that memory of her virtues and inheritance of good deeds without which titles and hereditary rank are but splendid contradictions and conspicuous blemishes.*

The father of Miss Mercer was a Virginian, the intimate friend and associate of Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe. His brothers and himself had all partaken of the perils and toils of the war of the Revolution, and he subsequently was elected to represent the district in which he resided in the Congress of the United States.

Having married Miss Sprigg, the daughter of Richard Sprigg, Esq., of Strawberry Hill, near Annapolis, and becoming possessed, in her right, of an extensive landed estate at West River, he removed from Virginia to that neighbourhood. He was one of the delegates from the State of Maryland to the Convention for the formation of the Constitution of the United States, and took a very leading part in the proceedings of that body, and was subsequently elected Governor. This led to his residence in Annapolis, where Miss Mercer was born in the year 1791, and where her earlier years were passed. After the expiration of his gubernatorial term, he withdrew to his estate at Cedar Park, where he devoted himself to agricultural pursuits and the

* Vide Memoir of Mrs. Godolphin.

training of his children. Governor Mercer was a gentleman of excellent education and refined taste, and had profited largely by his intercourse with the world; and it was his great delight to communicate to his daughter the advantages he had himself enjoyed. Her education was conducted under his immediate observation, and with but little assistance from other teachers; indeed her own remark was, that she had been "brought up at her father's feet." He took pleasure in watching and aiding the development of her intellectual powers, and cultivating her taste; and some letters and papers which she had piously preserved, prove his high qualifications for such a task. They exhibit a mind of the same mould as that in which her own was formed.

Of her earlier years little need be said. Beautiful, accomplished, and occupying a high social position, she entered upon life with the brightest prospects before her, and for a time participated in the usual amusements and occupations of the period and circle in which she moved. But though frequently repairing to Annapolis, then boasting a society of an unusually elevated order, to Baltimore, Washington, Alexandria, and the public watering places, the greater part of her time was passed in the beautiful seclusion of Cedar Park, where she enjoyed the advantage of a large and well-selected library, the proof of the taste and liberality of her ancestors, and was surrounded by

a circle of neighbours, whose cultivated intellects and elevated feelings made them especially congenial to her own character. There are few sections of our own, or any other country, can boast a society of greater refinement and intelligence than that with which she here associated. Her natural temperament was excitable and imaginative; in later life, speaking of the effect produced upon her by reading The Abbot, she writes: "I have given up Cullen and every thing else like reading, for three weeks past, to the cares of domestic perplexities; but I found a night to give to the sorrows of my childhood's favourite, the lovely Mary Stuart. I enter perfectly into the old Scotchman's feelings, in Zelucco, who fought so valiantly in defence of her memory. I always get up and leave the room, now, when any one speaks disrespectfully of her. If she had only been *firm* about marrying Bothwell! When I was a child, the summit of my ambition was to have been one of those maids who attended on her in captivity. To have kissed the hem of her garment, and received one sad smile, would have broken my heart with delight and sorrow."

One transient glimpse at the habits and feelings of this period of her life is afforded us as we pass, as it were, in the following extract from a lecture to young ladies on the subject of patience, exhibiting a beautiful illustration of her early dedication to the good work of binding up the broken-hearted,

ministering consolation to the afflicted, and seeking protection for the oppressed, so peculiarly the province of female effort. "One of the happiest influences I ever experienced from human example, was at that period of my life, when, carried along by the tide of fashion and folly, I spent my winters in the city, in the restless and unsatisfying search for pleasure, in which are universally engaged

> 'The gay licentious crowd,
> They who their thoughtless hours in giddy mirth,
> In wanton, oft in cruel riot, waste;'

and returned, in the summer, to the country to brood over fancied cares, and 'listless, drone the joyless hours away.' In a wood, close by the river's brink, stood an old hovel, into which the piercing wind, as it swept along the surface of the stream, found entrance through every board. There, lived an old fisherman with his wife and five children. The man was utterly unprincipled. He drank, and when he had taken but a small portion of liquor, he was apparently kind and good-humoured; but he, like every other habitual drunkard, never could cease drinking, until, overpowered by excess, he would sink down to slumber away the effects of his intemperance, and wake up a surly, passionate brute. His wife was a gentle, patient, unoffending being. For twenty years she had suffered all that mere bodily ill could inflict; she had been subject to abscesses, by which almost every joint in her frame

had been started from their sockets, and rendered inflexible. Her hips were dislocated, her elbows, even her fingers, were stiff, distorted, and scarred; for in all the joints of her hands she had the same imposthumation. In winter she had generally a return of the disease, and it was attended with the severest chills; so that when with every effort, in our comfortable dwellings, we could scarcely, (though young and healthy,) endure the cold, this poor diseased creature was shaking in her wretched bed with all the rigors of congestive ague. She had never been handsome, although her features were delicate, and her eyes blue, clear, and soft; but her complexion, which had been naturally fair, was dyed of the most sallow hue. I visited her frequently, and respected her uncomplaining piety and her industry, for she managed to sew and knit with her stiff and twisted limbs. I respected her desire to bring up her children religiously, and her unvarying patience with her unworthy husband. One day, (when I had known her for years without her ever having uttered a murmur,) she sent for me: she no longer even attempted to hobble, (as she had been accustomed to,) across her cabin floor, but dressed by her daughter, she was placed by her son in her comfortless seat, in which she sat knitting all the day. Her eyes had failed from weakness, so that she no longer enjoyed the comfort of reading the common print of her cheap Bible. When I

took my seat by her, she burst into tears; and now the burden of her heart was discovered. Her husband had grown more and more intemperate, her boys were growing up, and she could not see him destroy his own soul, and endanger theirs by his vicious example, without remonstrance. But instead of listening to her, he had even struck her, and often threatened to put her to death, that he might be relieved from the burden of maintaining such a helpless, useless creature. She had reason to fear for her life; and she thought it had become a duty to disclose the truth, that he might be prevented from committing such a crime. He was her husband, he had once been kind to her, and it grieved her heart to expose him; but she dared not conceal his conduct any longer. She did not *fear* to die, but a death of violence, by her husband's hand, was too horrible to think of. I wept with her, but gently endeavoured to turn her thoughts to the consolations of religion, when I beheld a mild beam irradiating her pale face; and looking intently before her, as if her thoughts were passing directly forward into another and a better world, she said, 'Oh yes, Miss Margaret, I often think there is no one in the world who has so much to be *thankful to God for* as I have.' I gazed at her in surprise and silence, when she earnestly and slowly added, 'to think how much trouble He has brought me through.' I returned home that day with a new spirit within me;

and whenever since I have been disposed to complain of my lot, I have remembered that lowly saint. I sent her a soft and comfortable couch which I had just made to lounge on myself, with a large Testament, and prohibited her brutal husband from coming on the estate. But for twelve long years she had still to toil through the tribulation of the saints, before the Lord saw that patience had perfected her work, and then He took her to everlasting rest in the bosom of light, life, and immortality. Ye who are fretting daily at every trifling vexation, remember Mary Tucker, and 'in your patience possess ye your souls.' "

It is not known at what period, or by what circumstances her mind was first led to the adoption of those religious views, which exerted so important an influence on her character, and made her so peculiar an object of interest. In after life she spoke of the change as the gradual development of a principle, the first unfoldings of which were scarce perceptible, and the earliest record found of them is in a letter written during her attendance upon the sick bed of a maternal aunt, to whom she was warmly attached, and whose Christian character doubtless had some influence in the formation of that of the niece. The letter is without date, but must have been written prior to the year 1814, to a friend in Essex County, Virginia. It was in reply to one

containing some reference to her supposed gratification in the usual enjoyments of youth.

"How different, my sweetest Coz., has been my occupation for the last month from that you imagine; shut up in a sick house, watching the turns of disease that has threatened to deprive me of the best friend I have on earth. . . . . And now let me ask you to rejoice with me that I have hopes of seeing my adored aunt restored to health. Thank Heaven, she is something better; for days she has been despaired of, but the Almighty heard our earnest prayer. I found her looking the image of my sainted mother, when, for the last few days, the troubled spirit seemed to have taken refuge with her God, her eyes glazed and vacant—but, merciful Father, I thank thee that thou hast not withdrawn this model from our imitation. . . . . Last night I had such a golden dream about going to Essex, but the town clock awakened me on the road. I do think that if you had a church, it would be a heavenly place. I could cry, whenever I recollect that there is no church for such dear good people to collect in and offer their thanks to Heaven for being so blest. I was confirmed, and had the pious blessing of our venerable old Bishop the day before I came from home. You cannot think how humble, how penitent, how happy I feel. It seems as though I still feel the pressure of his hand on my head. He has

promised to come to see me next spring. . . . . I do not think I was ever made for a married woman; I feel as if I was not intended to take so great a share in worldly things. If I did, I should forget my God, perhaps; and may Providence load me with every human misery, and deprive me of every earthly good rather than that. How I am wandering! but you will forgive me for following the train of my thoughts; had I forced them, I should have been affected." Such were the first ruddy dawnings of that spiritual life which was yearly more and more developed, until it shone bright, and clear, to the glory of Him, who had thus begun a good work in her, to be perfected only when, after forty years of earthly trial, she was taken to the rest prepared for His people. Its influence was ever on the increase, bringing into subjection, and appropriating to heavenly uses, every faculty of her mind and every feeling of her heart. The light of divine truth was with her, as it ever must be, like that of the material world, shining more and more to the perfect day. Faint as may be its beginning, cold and gray in some, warm and rich in its colouring in others, dark as may be the clouds that hang around its dawning, or gather about its ascending path, its allotted course is ever onward and upward, till, the influences of earth triumphantly overcome, it finds its full development in a state of existence free from

those mists and vapours which sin has cast around us here.

It was just prior to this period of her life, that Miss Mercer made a visit to her paternal relatives in Essex County, Virginia. To these relatives she formed an attachment of unusual strength. Founded on congeniality of character, built up by a perpetual interchange of acts of kindness, and cemented by entire unity in religious feelings, it continued to increase in strength till it was shattered by the hand of that power before which all earthly things must bow, and which terminates, for the time, at least, even the holiest ties.

One of these relatives, Miss Hunter, of Hunter's Hill, has furnished a sketch of her estimate of Miss Mercer, which will be drawn on freely in the course of this memoir. Referring to this period, she says: "Miss Mercer's first visit to Virginia, after she had passed the period of childhood, was made at that time of life when the girl has passed into the woman, and the distinctive peculiarities of mind, character, and manners are strikingly developed. Her relatives formed a very extensive connexion, embracing, of course, persons of every variety of age and disposition; yet her endearing qualities, the peculiar charm and interest of her manner and conversation, her strong and affectionate feeling of the ties of kindred, at once produced sentiments of tenderness in the hearts of many, which became friendship lasting

as life itself, excited the admiration of all, and gave rise in the younger portion of the connexion to an enthusiasm bordering almost on idolatry. Her succeeding visits but deepened the impression made by the first; they were anticipated with delight, and regarded as bright eras in life. Her looks, her words, her acts of love were treasured in the memory of her friends, and they felt that they had *lived* more during one week, in her society, than in ten times that period passed in the ordinary routine of life. Her *mind* and *heart* were always *awake*, and always *active* in stimulating the intellectual energies of others, and kindling in their hearts the flame of noble and generous feeling, and awakening high aspirations for excellence. It was always a subject of admiration and surprise to those who knew her, how far her spiritual could triumph over her physical nature; her nervous organization was one of peculiar delicacy, and her sufferings, even at this period, were often very severe. Yet when reduced to a condition in which ordinary persons would have been incapable of acting, if an appeal were made to her affection or her sense of duty, her energies were wont to arouse in a most astonishing manner, and incite her to efforts greatly beyond her strength." Thus early was exhibited that frailty of bodily health which she never surmounted, and which enhanced the value of all her subsequent efforts.

In personal appearance, Miss Mercer was peculiarly attractive; her stature was originally tall, her carriage graceful, her eye beaming with intelligence, and her whole countenance expressive of the loveliest traits of female character. Disease and care set their marks upon her face in after life, and caused her form to lose its symmetry, but never quenched the beaming of the eye, nor darkened the radiance of her soul, which shone on every feature to the very last. Her appearance was indeed the imbodiment of the *ideal* of female loveliness and worth; and it may be asserted with safety, that none ever approached her without receiving the impression of the presence of one elevated above the common grade of mortal life. There was a combination of the attractive graces with the impressiveness of superior power which is rarely met with; and while her manner was often sportive, and she could adorn the most common subjects of conversation by the most graceful turns of thought and purity of language, there was frequently an elevation of thought and force of expression, which carried those thrown into association with her, into a higher sphere than that of common every-day existence. Even those who could not sympathize with and appreciate her character, were still struck with this feature in it, and its influence was acknowledged in the fact, that none would dare to express before her sentiments or opinions which would have been

uttered in conversation with other persons without hesitation. There was something about her which enkindled in the bosom of all a desire to partake of her good opinion; and when in after life she entered upon the discharge of the task of instruction, the apprehension of a frown from Miss Mercer, was sufficient to check even the thoughtlessness of youth. Nor was this a mere evanescent impression, as her pupils have been known to declare, that long after they passed from under her authority, the sense of her approbation or condemnation of their course, exerted a powerful influence for restraint or encouragement.

Educated in a section of country abounding in varied scenes of surpassing loveliness, and surrounded, at her immediate home, by views possessed of great natural beauty and improved by high cultivation, her taste, originally good, became refined by these circumstances of elegance. Her perception of the beauties of nature was very quick, and she possessed high powers as an artist. Her flower-painting was almost unrivalled. There was a truthfulness and grace of drawing, a delicacy and perfection of colouring, and a power of combination and arrangement, which bespoke talent of the highest order in this branch of art, which she was ever ready to turn to account, either for the gratification of her friends, or as a means of contributing to the promotion of objects of benevolence.

One of the earliest and most persistent traits of her character was an entire *self-abandonment.* It was more than is expressed by the want of selfishness, this is but a negative virtue; with Miss Mercer, it was the positive sacrifice of *self* for the benefit of others; and even at the early period of her life, now under notice, this trait was sufficiently developed to form a decided feature in the portrait of her mind. Thus Miss Hunter, whose opportunities of observation commenced at an early period of her life, and were continued, without interruption, and extended to the most intimate confidence, even to the end, remarks: "It might be said of her, without fear of exaggerated eulogy, that she lived for others, and never appeared to be actuated by any motive of personal interest, comfort, or convenience." And this observation is equally true, whether applied to the daily trifling events which afford an opportunity for the exhibition of the state of the affections to those by whom we are surrounded, and which constitute the sum of human happiness or misery, or to those greater actions which require a more positive effort of exertion. There was a grace in the manner in which her kindness was performed, which removed from the receiver the oppressive sense of obligation. These were the native instincts of her heart; and sanctified and elevated as they were by the influence of the Spirit of God, they rendered her a living example of every grace.

Her literary taste was highly cultivated, and her mind having been formed on a correct model, by early familiarity with the best authors of our own language and of France, she was able to criticise the passing literature of the day with great propriety. Much of her earlier correspondence is thus occupied, and exhibits a sound judgment and correct discrimination of the beauties and imperfections of the works which came under her notice. Yet was she never beguiled by the beauty of language, or force of expression, into an admiration of that which was untrue or of evil influence. Her mind shrunk with instinctive abhorrence from that most hateful of all the exhibitions of evil, in which it is clothed in the attractiveness with which misapplied genius can adorn it. As the dazzling scales and the varied hue of its covering but enhance the feeling of aversion, with which nature shrinks from the envenomed serpent, so the pure soul turns with the more intense loathing and disgust from those fearful exhibitions of the depth of human iniquity, in which the very lights and ornaments of God's own truth are perverted to conceal the deadly poison of soul-destroying error. Thus, in writing to a friend, she says: "Lara is certainly by Byron. Mr. Dallas, the secretary of Gallatin, saw it in manuscript whilst he was writing at Ghent. It is not equal to much that he has written, but I think it shows great genius. He is quite a Salvator Rosa in the terribly sublime;

but I was so disgusted with Childe Harold, that I am not free from prejudice on the subject. I cannot bear the black, gloomy, desperate wretch, who sinks under the oppression of this world. The soul, destined for eternity, should rise superior to the shores of time. You will say these remarks apply to the *man;* but do you not agree with me in thinking that his *own* soul is the original from which all his delineations are made. I have been more enchanted with the Queen's Wake of Hogg, than any thing that I have seen. It is not very original, at least it contains much that may be considered as plagiarism, yet it is beautiful and almost miraculous, considering the circumstances." Writing again to the same friend, she resumes the subject: "I am sorry you think me too hard on your friend Byron. His genius I admire certainly, but surely you will admit he makes a bad use of his powers. Recollect those lines of Childe Harold,

> 'Poor child of darkness and of death,
> Whose hope is built on reeds.'

What a sentiment! Thomas says, eloquently, in French, that the infidel looks in vain *around* him for arguments against Providence. Every blade of grass confutes him, and he is forced to retire into his own black heart, where alone the gloomy chaos exists. So I fear poor Byron must form his ideas of fate from contemplating himself, and doubt the

existence of a God, because he cannot perceive His hand in the composition of his own soul. I hate to be uncharitable, but the man who so boldly steps forward to defy the powers above, has no need of my indulgence; I must despise his heartless insensibility in not feeling that there is a great and good God, and I must abhor the malice that would induce a man to spread an infectious disease which torments himself. This is my defence."

In like manner she criticises the style, conception, and moral influence of Scott's works as they issued, and other productions of the press.

Her character comprised elements apparently very diverse, and yet all combined into a perfect whole, as the varied colours in the ray of light. Gentle, and full of affection for all, and ready to sympathize with sorrow wherever met with, feelings, the evidence of which will be found scattered every where around these traces of her path through life, she yet possessed an energy and firmness rarely found in this connexion. The circumstances detailed in the following extract from a letter written to one of her Essex relatives, will exhibit a degree of courage and energy which few possess.

"I am afraid, my dearest cousin, that you have all been out of patience before my letters reached you; but I cannot, in conscience, lay the blame of my silence on the mails. I was so sick, so harassed with the sickness and troubles of others, or 'mine

ain,' that I did not put pen to paper for nearly four weeks, and when I did, it was with an invincible apathy, which chilled every current of thought or feeling. Since that I have been roused, by a rattling peal of thunder, from the sleep which had dominion over my spirits. I wrote to you that I was alone at West River; my brother had left me to put himself under medical care; I was staying by myself, with little Tommy, thinking too much of my brother and Richard Stuart, who had been ill for four weeks, when a violent commotion broke out in the family; and like the savage whose indolence explodes at the war whoop, (as the concussion of a pistol dissipates a noxious vapour,) I started from my inanity, and appeared, with the fury of an inspired pythoness, the savage intrepidity of Helen M'Gregor, the despotic pride of Queen Elizabeth, when the spirit of Harry the Eighth rose within her. I declare to you, that when I found myself in the midst of the negroes, after their having used the greatest violence towards the overseer, when they were seizing him and holding him with every demonstration of rage, I did not know myself. I felt ten feet high, and as if the strongest man on the place would have been an infant in strength to me. I declare I believe in the Indian philosopher's account of the creation and distribution of souls; and that by some caprice of the winds, the soul of some Indian chief was wafted into the feeble frame of a

poor sickly little girl, and has been educated, and educated in vain, to make it suitable to its condition in life. I had well nigh gone off like a sky-rocket for you know,

> 'This fiery soul is working out its way—
> It o'er informs the tenement of clay,
> And frets the pigmy body to decay.'

I had completely curbed the spirit, and, I verily believe, saved the shedding of blood, when, just as I had sunk into the consequent weakness of nerve and feeling, my aunt and Mr. Law, having heard, accidentally, of the circumstance, came down and brought me here."

Thus in *mock heroic* did she attempt to veil an action requiring such true heroism as few females are endowed with. In the same strain, at another time, she describes a similar, though less perilous effort. "I must tell you of an adventure I had the other night. Some ragamuffin, thinking that all the family were from home, I suppose, came and attempted to break into the house per force, but I threw up the window and frightened him so that he fell down dead like Falstaff, and all my soliloquies could not rouse him, till I left the window and went to call the servants—when, like his valiant prototype, he rose and retreated with all expedition." Her admiration of cool, determined *moral* courage was very great. Thus, soon after the close of the war of 1812, she writes: "The President and Cabi-

net spent two days with us last week. Tell your mamma that the old gentleman won my heart, entirely by some traits of feeling that I did not expect from him, and propitiated me entirely for Mrs. M. by a story he told for her. Mr. Calhoun, who was with him, is one of the greatest men I ever saw. Papa is perfectly enraptured with his mind and manners; and there were others, and among those others was one—but I will say nothing of a hero who provoked a battery to fire on him, and then walked slowly backward to notice the range of their fire. I will not say what I thought of such a man on intimate acquaintance."* Upon another occasion she says: "Twenty letters, my dearest ——, in which there was not one word I could frame an exception to, would not prove so certain a stimulus to my pen as a difference of opinion, especially if that difference involved the character of a favourite. I am strongly bent on defending my friend Edward, and if I have a tolerably correct recollection of The Monastery, it will not prove beyond even my limited skill to frame a defence for him. I wish the Queen of England's cause had been as favourable to Brougham's talents. In the first place, I admit you are perfectly correct as to the importance of courage in the character of a man, that there is nothing atones for the want of it—that, in fact, there is no *virtue* without it; but, my dear coz., there are as many shades and

* Col. McCrea, of North Carolina.

grades in the qualities of courage, as in any thing else belonging to the ever-varying condition of human life. Now that animal bravery which your friend Halbert possessed in common with the housebreaker, the mail-robber, the privateer's-man, the wolf, and the bear, is, in my opinion, nearly as unfavourable and adverse to the formation of the noble and generous magnanimity of moral courage, as the wisdom of this world is often opposed to the wisdom which comes from God. If moral courage should be grafted on animal courage successfully, doubtless the strength of the stock will improve the character of the fruit. But unfortunately the animal principle is a rude wild growth which can scarcely be led through the delicate veins of the more perfect plant; but rather shooting its unprofitable and eccentric vigour into thorny and fruitless branches, leaves the graft to perish, and the disappointed gardener to grieve over his lost time and care. I have a very indifferent memory; indeed principles, not men, have been the chief employment of my mind. But I think Edward, in several instances, proved that the energy of his *mind* was more than equal to counterbalance the *weakness* of his *nerves*. He loved Mary next to high heaven, and before himself; but he would not have followed a spirit which he had some misgiving was the devil, as Halbert did, into another world. As for his hatred of Halbert, it was a slander. The generous feelings which were

roused by the supposed murder of his brother were natural to his quiet and Christian spirit, where strong earthly passions are only kept down and regulated by stronger heavenly ones, and quiet, meek humility arises from the mortifying sense of the strength of rebellious nature.

"Moral courage, or that dignified constancy of mind which alone deserves our admiration, is like the sublime, better defined by examples than description. A young man of very delicate health was observed by one of your ferocious, merciless desperadoes to tremble in battle. 'What, sir!' said the man of animal courage, with contemptuous reproach, 'you are a coward—you are afraid.' 'Yes, sir,' said the young man calmly; 'and had you been as much afraid, you would have run away long ago.' Dr. John Hunter was very fond of a menagerie of wild beasts. He had two fine young tigers, which, as they grew, became so ferocious with their strength that even the keeper dared hardly appear at the cage to feed them. By some unfortunate accident they escaped. Every one fled in the greatest terror, and alarm was spread around; no one dared to attempt taking them, when Dr. H. walked firmly up to them, took hold of their collars, led them into their cage; and when he had fastened the door, and all was safe, he fell dead on the spot.* But the

* Miss Mercer was in error in this statement. Dr. Hunter fainted, but lived many years after this event.

nerves of our desperate and detestable neighbour, the Guinea Captain, so distinguished for his dauntless ferocity in privateering, formed no element in the composition of the magnanimous courage of Dr. Hunter. I read an anecdote of a Quaker in whom the moral and animal courage were finely united, although I cannot say but that my "Friend's" principles were a little sophisticated. During the French war he found himself a passenger in a ship which came to a severe conflict with a French vessel. Nothing said could induce the man of peace to take the slightest interest in the battle, though he quietly walked the deck as the balls flew around him. At last the French, getting the advantage, grappled and boarded, or attempted to board; for the first man that leaped on the deck, the Quaker sprang forward, and seizing with a powerful grasp, said deliberately, 'Friend, thou hast no business here,' and flung him into the sea; which so animated the crew that they succeeded in beating off the enemy, and escaped. Now this is my idea of true courage, and I think Edward possessed it. That certain, just, and elevated moral principles should be so powerfully, so clearly established as to make the observance of them paramount to every other consideration in fast faith in God, is the only perfect courage."*

With some of the fearful scenes of the war of

* The reader need hardly be told that the anecdote here given is, to say the least, very apocryphal.

1812 she was painfully familiar; being in the immediate vicinity of Baltimore at the time of the attack upon the city, when but for the death of General Ross, it would have been subjected to all the horrors inseparable from the presence of a hostile army. The following letters manifest the perfect composure of her mind, amid scenes well calculated to agitate one less susceptible than she.

"Although we are still in suspense, I know it will be a great relief to you, my dear cousin, to hear that we are still in existence, and likely to be so, should the enemy have no re-enforcements. On Monday they landed about ten miles from town, and defeated about four thousand of our men, who retreated to town, and were followed to the lines, about a mile and a half from the city, where, I suppose, finding our lines too formidable, they fell back, and are now either waiting for re-enforcements or preparing for embarkation. We have but about twenty thousand men. The fort affords a complete protection from the fleet—at least, it has stood twenty-one hours' heavy bombardment—lost only four men killed, and the works not injured. They threw, we hear, fifteen hundred shells. I am sure this calculation is accurate, for we saw and counted every one from these windows. Finding this attack ineffectual, and not being able to come within gunshot, they have all gone down to the mouth of the river, and we have a little respite. George Steuart

is very slightly wounded,—my brother safe, though very much worsted, riding day and night since the alarm. He joined a troop of horse immediately on our return from a ride we had taken for my health. We were at Bridgewater, Pennsylvania, where I was recovering very fast, when we heard the alarm, and pushed home to our friends. We have passed two horrible days and nights, but I rejoice that I am in the midst of them. I do not think they will take the town, especially if, as is universally said by the prisoners and deserters, Ross is killed in the action on Monday." A few days later, she adds:

"I promised to write again, my ever dear cousin, and I should have done it the next day, had any thing of moment occurred; but we have been quiet ever since the fleet moved off. Their attack on the fort was unsuccessful; they lost their General and several other officers on land, and there was nothing more to do. With the co-operation of the fleet, they expected to take the town and fort at the same time, but the bombardment failing, they were glad to move off, and would to heaven we were never to see another on this side of the ocean. All that I love are safe. We were within sight of every shell and gun; but I believe I wrote you all about it. I have been in such a state of confusion that I cannot recollect what I wrote; but I know that since then we have discovered that our state of defence is quite unequal to resisting ten thousand men, disciplined

as European troops are. Perhaps another week may lay us all in the dust."

She was subsequently placed in circumstances still more closely affecting those in whose welfare she was most deeply interested, and there displayed yet higher evidence of cool determined power of action in a position most likely to overwhelm the judgment of one whose sensibilities were so acute as hers. Decidedly as she expressed her admiration of courage, and capable as she was of appreciating its value, her heart was not closed to the gentler emotions, and at the close of the war she writes: "On returning home, after an absence of three months, I found an old letter from my dear cousin: I have indeed been very faulty, but the truth is, I was too *unhappy* till the peace, and *too happy* since, to do any thing. I was *crazy* for one day, and *silly* ever since. Oh, my dear cousin, you can scarcely form an idea of my situation; not able to stay at home, and feeling like a poor exile every where else; looking forward to my brother's going to Canada immediately, and that I could not stand. I do not think I should ever have seen him again. I could not have lived through a single campaign—but it is all over, and we are happy again."

But whilst her affections and feelings were ever thus excitable, there was constantly a calm undercurrent of sound practical wisdom, which kept them

within due limit in their actings, except so far as she allowed them to lead her, from sympathy with others, to disregard her own comfort or advantage. In early life, especially, her character partook undoubtedly of a high degree of enthusiasm, and even in her later years the same tendency would display itself; but it was never permitted to lead her into any extravagance of action. It was indeed a healthful enthusiasm, and proved a powerful incentive to high and holy undertakings. Her mind seemed incapable of repose; it was ever in active operation, and in this ceaseless activity it seized upon every subject that presented itself with more or less tenacity of purpose, and devoted itself with untiring energy to its consideration. In the years of her life now immediately under our observation, botanical studies opened to her a source of great delight, and amid the quiet shades of Cedar Park, and the varied scenes of the neighbourhood, she spent day after day in seeking out the beautiful plants with which our hill-sides and meadows abound. Her love for flowers amounted to a passion, and the accuracy and elegance with which she delineated them has been already referred to, and exceed the belief of those who have never witnessed it. She was desirous of promoting the study, as healthful in its associated circumstances, and refining and elevating in its influence on the mind; and to promote this end, botanical cards, botanical games, and botanical dra-

mas and verses were all produced by her prolific mind. It was not with her the mere philosophical detail of orders and genera; there was a romantic feeling, as of *entity*, connected with every plant, which led her to attach herself to it, as though it was capable of exercising reciprocal affection; and she sportively writes to a friend of congenial tastes and pursuits, "I am very busy in my botanical studies, and the wild flowers may look out if they have any reluctance to being transferred to my Flora. Indeed, I can hardly suspect them of such low desires and tastes. Think you that the passion of the hero, who courts death, and exults in being cut off in the bloom of youth, that he may be immortalized in history, may not be the inmate of some little flower's bright bosom, which else were doomed

'To blush unseen,
And waste its fragrance on the desert air?'

We will have many a ramble yet in your wild woods, where they flourish so gayly. Do, if you meet with any remarkable for their beauty, transplant them to some secure spot, where we may find them next year." At another time we find her apologizing for the insult offered to her natural favourites by the "disciple of Jussieu, condescending to overseam calico flowers on a counterpane." At the close of a letter to a friend, she quotes the original Hebrew of Genesis ii. 8, and says, "Do you

know what that is? '*And the Lord God planted a garden.*' Let us take it for our motto, for surely in his very best estate we cannot imagine that God ever conferred a better fate on man, than when He planted for him a garden, and set him to dressing it." But it was not upon these sportive fancies alone that her mind exerted its powers. Graver subjects occupied her attention, and performed their part in giving increased vigour to her reasoning faculties, whilst the others were adding to the already abounding stores of her fertile imagination. It has been mentioned that she had access to a choice collection of works on history and general literature: these were her familiar companions, and her mind was thoroughly stored with their contents; whilst we find her sometimes deep in mathematics, allowing herself but four hours' rest in the twenty-four, that she might bring her mind under the wholesome discipline of this parent of careful thought; at others, theological discussions asserted an unrivalled empire over her mind, and in order to drink, as she supposed, more purely from the fountain itself, with less intervention of human teaching, she devoted herself with almost undivided attention to the study of Hebrew; and a short time after, we find her carefully threading the intricate mysteries of medical science, that by the acquisition of correct knowledge on the nature of diseases and remedies, she might enlarge the sphere of her benevolent useful-

ness. The deep abstractions of metaphysics did not deter her from trying to fathom those abysses into which the mind plunges its line in vain, growing old in drawing up no certain token of reaching the solid foundation over which its deep waters roll so proudly. She remarks to a friend: "I do not come on very well with metaphysics; I dislike any thing so inconclusive, and should be tired of following an angel, if he talked so in a ring." A paper of "Thoughts on the Magnet" proves her to have given attention to natural philosophy, and at an early period to have attempted to solve some of those mysterious truths which are now but dawning upon the horizon of human knowledge. But whilst on all these subjects she could express herself with ease and eloquence, there was a simplicity and delicacy about her character which separated her as widely as can be conceived from that class of "women of masculine understanding," whose assumption of claims to superiority over their own sex leads them to despise the refinements and delicacy which communicate an appropriate and attractive grace to the female character. These can never be laid aside, no matter how great the positive acquirement, without a violation of the laws of nature, and a consequent shock to that unity of action which constitutes the beauty of the works of Him, who gave to each an appropriate part in the sublime harmony of the universe, which attests His wisdom and power.

Never was feminine grace more beautifully illustrated than in her whole career. She never forgot that it is the peculiar province of woman to minister to the comfort, and promote the happiness, first, of those most nearly allied to her, and then of those, who by the providence of God are placed in a state of dependence upon her. To discharge these duties was her unceasing object, to the accomplishing which she devoted herself with entire singleness of purpose. Thus she writes to a friend: "I, like every little mole toiling in his own dark passage, have been given to murmuring, and my great complaint for some time past has been, that I was cut off from every means of usefulness, and could not find any thing on earth to do that might not as well remain undone; and while I am fretting at having nothing to do, you find equal discomfort in having too much. Somebody, no matter who, has said the secret of happiness was that the busy find leisure, and the idle find business, and it would seem so between us. And yet I doubt whether happiness is not a principle which belongs exclusively to God, and whether we can ever be satisfied till we wake up in his likeness. Whenever you can find that spot, sacred to religious peace and true friendship, send for me to your paradise, but remember this is the reward promised to those who *have gone through* the struggle of our great spiritual warfare."

At this time her pencil, her pen, and her needle were all put in requisition in aid of the Greeks in their struggle for liberty. Miss Hunter remarks, "Love was with her the fulfilling of the law. At the very time she thus speaks of herself as having nothing to do that was worth doing, we find her engaged in comforting, assisting, and cheering all who came within the sphere of her influence; now actively employed in the Sunday-School; now aiding the Greek cause, and the Colonization Society with the fanciful productions of her pencil, or *exquisite* needle-work, and stimulating the moral and intellectual energies of the youthful portion of her friends." Thus she wrote to a friend and relative at this time.

My dear ——,

I have business for you—no less than to write an African tale for the Colonization Society. Will you begin forthwith? My idea is to show the advantages with which Christianity invests the savage. First, to open with the description of a little girl sporting in the woods, rolling her cocoa-nuts, and throwing her oranges, and dancing under every palm tree, with long wreaths of flowers; send her bounding home in the evening, and as she approaches the house, under the cover of a screen of bushes, let her be suddenly arrested by the discovery of a party of slave-dealers, in close treaty with her mother, who, decorated in gaudy beads and red

flannel, should be heard to exclaim, I will give my little girl for them, if you wait until she comes in from play. At this, send the little heroine back to the woods to spend the night; let her creep into an excavated bank to sleep, after wandering in the dusk, where she alternates all the terrors which now the fear of lions and tigers, now the imagination of being pursued by her mother and the white man create; let her hear her mother's voice calling her, and the rustling of the leaves that conceal her from view; and on the next day let her be joined by a little companion—a boy some years older—who has been searching for her, in terror of her having been destroyed by the wild beasts; let her at first dread to discover herself to him, but at last, moved and encouraged by his expressions of anxiety for her fate, let her come from her hiding-place, and throw herself on his affection and compassion: let him save her by guiding her far up into the interior to some old grandmother, who is to adopt them both, without knowing the whole truth; but when they are grown, let her be brought forcibly back to her mother, let him come back rather than desert her—then let the crime be accomplished, and throw them both into a slave vessel, and describe the prison deck, then the punishments to prevent them drowning themselves; let them, on a fine bright day, meet the Leon, and hear the wretched crew lamenting the awful judgment which has come upon them; let our

hero and heroine be only saved from suicide by their affection for each other, and after going through the horrors of the voyage, from cruelty, disease, and despair, land them, and let them be purchased together by an American Christian visiting the West Indies—a Quaker, if you please—and after her meeting with her cruel mother in slavery, and prevailing on the Quaker to relieve her from the highly contrasted miseries of her situation; let them all come to the United States, and end by going home good Christians in the colony's vessel, filled with recollections of the horrors of early life, and inspired by God with a devoted energy in the missionary cause. Filled up with glowing description of the country, the circumstances of the voyage, the feelings on landing, the relief of being freed, and the rich influence of Christianity upon the human mind under such circumstances, it might be made an exquisite thing. Deb. told me the other day that she herself saw a cargo brought into Baltimore, and a girl told her that her mother sold her for a cow. A king's son at Mount Vernon says his father sold him for a *yard of red flannel*, so that, work it up as you will, it is still 'an o'er true tale.'"

Her interest in Sunday-Schools, also, at this time, was very intense, and the energy with which she engaged in this and every project presenting the prospect of benefit to her fellow-creatures is exhibited in the following extracts from letters written

by her during a visit to her friends in Essex, Virginia, where she first became acquainted with their practical operations.

"You will feel pleased, as will your dear good mother, my respected and most tenderly loved friend, feel pleased, to hear that I am rid of the burden of anxiety which pressed so heavily on my spirits. The prospect before me appears cheering, and I may venture at present to say I am as happy as human nature and human life may hope to be. You will see me, ere long, returning to my father's house, and to much more, I trust, than my former activity of usefulness. I have been learning many good things in this good mansion. Among others, I have been cutting out employment for you and Mary Ann —— and Sally ——, and J——, and as many other good people as choose to aid us in the establishment of a Sunday-School. My admirable relative, Mr. Garnet, has organized one here, and conducts it himself, in which there are now one hundred and sixty scholars, and many have been dismissed, having learned, at even an advanced age, to read their 'blessed Bible.' Even the young children of the family have their lower classes, in which the virtues of the heart and the government of the temper are increased by exercise from their earliest days. I think our Lancaster school-house might be turned in that way to excellent account, and the attention to it would afford us good exercise and em-

ployment. I shall bring home the rules and regulations, lists of books, and all that are necessary. Suppose you commence with the organization of the plan against I come home, that no time may be lost. My head is filled with schemes of benevolence and usefulness, at the head of which stands the plan which I intrusted to your mamma and yourself. My soul is in it, and yesterday I commenced the study of botany as preparatory to it. In fine, when my head turns to this subject, it seems to me I want forty heads, well stored with strong sense, forty frames supported by vigorous strength and health, and a hundred hands as organs of execution for the plans and projects of my one head. . . . . Continue, my dear friend, to look forward to the event of your efforts, and do not faint. 'Believe, and thou shalt be saved.' The offering of a cup of cold water for the love of God is not to go unrewarded; and so the widow's mite was acceptable, not from its usefulness, but from its evincing the condition of the heart —is it not so? Your afflictions, which are but for a time, are to work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, than any enjoyment in the exercise of any power with which humanity is gifted."

A week later she writes to the same friend.

"I spent Sunday morning in the Sunday-School, where the members of this inestimable family of mine were employed in teaching a hundred poor

children, all neatly and respectably dressed, orderly in their deportment, and progressing rapidly with spelling-books, testaments, &c. The numerous advantages arising from the charitable institution, were so forcibly impressed on my mind, that I am earnestly bent upon our Lancaster house being turned to this account, and furthermore on not one day being lost. If you agree with me, I know your exertions in the cause of humanity will never be wanting, and I wish you could get the books and collect the school, counting on me as a regular teacher and subscriber. If you can get it up, it must be by a subscription in the neighbourhood. Eighty dollars will be the first cost of the books, and you may call upon papa for my share of it. . . . Never were my feelings more powerfully affected than by a prayer which Mr. Garnet made at the opening of the school. I have procured a copy of it, and intend it to be read in our school. So moving is a good example; seeing one in operation has proved to me how much good may be done by those who have the soul to act the parts of the madmen in O. I wish I knew that you were going on as rapidly as I am, in the recovery of that most precious of all human possessions, health. I do not suppose that I can ever be perfectly well, but if the next three weeks continue to increase my stock, I shall be able to pay those debts for which I am now a bankrupt, and to set up again in business with the commerce

of life, feeling, as I do, an humble reliance on the promise of God, that all my debts to Him have been cancelled by my Saviour. . . . .

"I am very busy in my botanical studies, and the wild flowers may look out if they have any reluctance to being transplanted into my Flora."

Even from the midst of the gaieties and excitement of the national metropolis, she writes:

"Although at the very centre of news, and the emporium of gaiety, I neither know, nor, entre nous, care one cent about what is going on outside of my sitting-room. Intriguing for office, local politics, personal jealousies infect the very air, until to breathe it is sickening. I long for green grass, free breath, free heart, and the *Sunday-School.*" And upon the occasion of her return from a visit to Alexandria, she thus expresses her views of the proper occupation of the talents with which we may be endowed. The letter is in reply to one from an intimate and highly valued friend, urging the claims of society upon one so well qualified to shine in its most brilliant circles.

From my own beloved quiet Dove's Nest.

My dear Friend,—

As I find you are not disposed to receive my visits, except they come in a certain form, you must e'en *wait* until I am in a mood to pay visits according to the prescribed mode. It is well for you that I have been permitted to seat myself in "mine ain

biggin" again, or you would never have heard another word of me. My soul appeared to be gradually evaporating, from its close contiguity to a vacuum; and my body, incarcerated in a coal-hole, gradually wasted its substance, which (as rapidly replaced by coal dust,) would have soon been in a state to suffocate you if you touched it—as those mummies which the Count De Fontbain came in contact with, smothered him in the catacombs of Egypt.

What mighty profitable, and pretty lectures may be got up, when you dispense with the necessity of proving your principles. You are lecturing me in a manner which formerly would have been highly stimulating, and perhaps set me off like a balloon, to carry passengers into the clouds. But the gas which inflates these vessels of presumption is vanity; and although I was once among the most buoyant with it, several tremendous explosions have thoroughly dispersed its fumes, and even destroyed the chemical attraction by which it was produced. Never shall I move an inch again, from any vain idea of being under an obligation to mix with society. A little single drop, separated for ever from the element in which it was formed, though crystallized in dark, cold, gloomy caverns, is a thing to be valued. But who would melt it down and cast it again into the muddy stream of life? I acknowledge that there are many persons around me vastly

better than I am; but I am speaking of society, not people, and I confess that the "unidea-ed chatter of females" is past my endurance;—they are very capable of better things, but what of that? Is it not yet more annoying, that they will do nothing better? And besides all this, I have more painful feelings of embarrassment in company than I had at sixteen. I am *old*, too, and when I go into gay scenes the illusion is gone, and I fancy the illuminated hall to resemble the castle of enchantment, where Armida kept all who were capable of virtue bound in the lap of pleasure.—I think how a M. Fellenberg has devoted a noble spirit to a grand system of education, and given them the model. All admire, all talk of it, and no one on the wide globe follows the example. Mrs. Fry opens the prison gates—looses the bonds of the captive—carries healing into broken hearts, or plants virtue where vice was the only growth—what are all these chattering women about, that they cannot wear a simple garb, and follow her to jails and hospitals and poor-houses? No—if I cannot do good where there is so much to do, I never was and never will be a votary of folly."

Whilst she had been so much excited by her observation of Mr. Garnet's Sunday-School, and impressed by the prayer with which it was opened, Mrs. Garnet, who, about this time, commenced her well-known academy for young ladies, requested Miss Mercer to send her some written prayers for

the use of her school. Miss Hunter introduces her reply with the remark: "Her conversational eloquence always excited the admiration of her hearers, but on sacred subjects, she expressed her thoughts with so much fervour, fluency, and earnestness—so much simplicity and beauty, that such a request made to her could have excited surprise in no mind but her own." Yet with characteristic modesty she thus writes:

"It seems, my beloved cousin, always as if my heart was so full of grateful affection that there was no room for more, and yet I never receive a letter from you that does not bring new claims with it. I am delighted with the fair prospects of your school. God will always bless such enterprises. He sometimes tries them in the beginning, but only to *prove* the virtue there is in them. The proposal you make to me, from any other source I should have thought flattery, and it fills me with the deepest humility now to find how far I am appreciated beyond my merit. As for the sacred and awful duty of prayer, I find myself always, in approaching the throne of the Most High, so impressively reminded of being but a worm of the dust, incapable of understanding my own wants, or interests, that my prayers, except when my heart has been overflowing with some peculiar suffering or trial, have at best been circumscribed to the measure of the poor hermit's—

'Lord, as in heaven, on earth thy will be done.'

"If my excellent cousin wishes assistance in an undertaking, for which I think he is himself peculiarly gifted, I was perfectly enchanted while in Baltimore, with a book called 'Smith's Lectures on the Duties and Offices of the Christian Ministry.' .... Tell cousin James that my favourite prayer is the heathen one, 'Lord, grant us what is good, though I may not know how to ask it, and save us from what is evil, though we may ignorantly desire it.'

"Montgomery has some beautiful thoughts on prayer. I have often regretted that children were not taught more of the *nature* of prayer. How carefully should we guard every avenue of the heart, if we were early impressed with the importance of constant communion with God, and that, in fact, the daily feeling of our mind is our incessant prayer to the Almighty; for

> 'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
> Uttered or unexpressed.'"

He to whom all desires are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, can be very little affected with a form of words when he sees that every disposition and desire of the soul is another way. "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy name."

There is no more fruitful source of the weakness of Christian graces, than the want of a proper appreciation of the true character of prayer. How many

make themselves miserable by the effort to devote a certain time to prayer, or enumerate a certain number of objects and persons in a mere form of verbal address, without having the affections and desires of the heart properly directed to the subject. No other incentive to the habitual seeking after intercourse with the Father of spirits can be needed by the believer on the authority of Him who "knew what was in man," than the simple direction to His followers to "enter into the closet, and shut the door, and pray to our Father in secret." The example of Jesus adds force to the precept, if that were possible, and the sweet experience of every renewed soul will cause it, in despite of the unhallowed struggles of the flesh to mar or prevent the pleasure of communion with its God and Saviour, to seek often to be found before the mercy-seat, striving to offer a sacrifice in spirit and in truth. Without this drawing of the heart, the mere utterance of words is but the "vain repetition" condemned by our Lord. As certainly as the heart follows the treasure, so surely will one convinced truly of his own need, and the sufficiency there is in Him who has taught us that he listens to the sighing of the contrite heart, and treasures up the tears of the penitent—seek relief in prayer. It may be the mere uplifting of the affections, the unuttered groan with which the spirit labours; but such prayers are, like the widow's mite, of more value in the sight of Him who knoweth all things, than all the costly and laboured offerings brought

by those who feel themselves rich in expression, whilst the heart is unmoved.

Prayer can never be a duty to God, as though any advantage were to accrue to Him from its discharge by man. It is the importunate craving of the soul sinking under a sense of its need of aid from without itself, and it must originate in a sense of want to be supplied, or sin to be forgiven. It is a duty to ourselves to investigate our condition, and our relation to the Judge of the quick and dead, to try ourselves by the standard of His holy word and Spirit. When this examination exhibits our weakness, our emptiness, our coldness, deadness, or rebellion, prayer is the up-springing of the soul to the Fountain from whence strength, fulness, warm affections, spiritual life, and the turning of the heart, all are derived. But it is an amazing privilege to be permitted to make known our wants with prayer and supplication to One who "heareth prayer," and has promised that none shall seek His face in vain. The same principle is equally applicable to the case of intercession for others. While it may justly be esteemed a duty we owe to our neighbour, to seek for him the blessings which are promised in answer to prayer, unless the desire springs from the heart, it must fail to find acceptance with him, who of old uttered the complaint against His people, not that they did not seek him at all, but that "they drew near to Him with the lips, while the *heart* was far from Him." Where there is

true apprehension of the omnipresence of God and his readiness to hear prayer, it will spontaneously gush forth in behalf of every object and cause on which the heart is fixed, and the fervent prayer thus offered becomes effectual to the accomplishment of the desire of the soul.

Miss Mercer's estimate of the value of prayer was very high. Years after this period, in writing to a nephew who had recently received a commission in the navy, and was about to sail, she says: "I can only follow you, my dear little sailor-boy, with my thoughts and prayers. Yes, dear Willie, the wind will never blow now without my heeding it; the bitter biting frost will never reach me in the winter's night, but I shall fancy you on the watch and exposed to its severity. May the God who rules in heaven and on earth, and cares for all His creatures, be peculiarly your Father. May He protect and bless and save you both body and soul. May He suggest by His ever-present Spirit all good to your mind, and guide you in the performance of all duties. Dear Willie, cleave unto Him, for He is thy life and the length of thy days. *Pray to Him*, reverence his holy name, and *supplicate* Him fervently for His Son's sake to give you *first* His righteousness, and then all things that are essential to your temporal and eternal welfare, and He is *pledged* to do it. Never doubt Him. If you feel a doubt creeping over your mind from seeing the infidelity of men, cast your eyes around you at His visible crea-

tion. The heavens and the earth, and the great ocean with all its wonders speak a language which should put infidelity to the blush. He who *made all* things must *know all* things; therefore, God sees your necessities, before you ask. But if He chooses to withhold his blessings until you have asked for them, take care that the greatest, most precious, most indispensable of all His blessings are not denied to you because you do not ask them from Him in spirit and in truth."

After much most affectionate and discreet advice, appropriate to the circumstances of his condition, she encloses the following, and adds:

"Take it with you, dear Willie, and read it often to remind you of the great privilege of prayer. *How many* blessings wait upon it, God only knows, but many, we know, more than we are apt to think of without some memento, let this be one to you:"

TO MY SOUL.

Not on a prayerless bed, not on a prayerless bed,
Compose thy weary limbs to rest;
For they alone are blest
With balmy sleep,
Whom angels keep;
Not though by care opprest,
Or thought of anxious sorrow,
Not though in many a toil perplexed
For coming morrow;
Lay not thy head
On prayerless bed.

For who can say when sleep thine eyes shall close,
That earthly cares and woes
To thee may e'er return?
Rouse up, my soul!
Slumber control,
And let thy lamp burn brightly;
So shall thine eyes discern
Things pure and sightly;
Taught by the Spirit, learn
Never on prayerless bed
To lay thine unblest head.

Bethink thee, slumbering soul, of all that's promised
To faith, in holy prayer.
Lives there, within thy breast,
A worm that gives unrest?
Ask peace from Heaven;
Peace will be given.
Humble self-love
Before the Crucified,
Who for thy sins has died—
Nor lay thy weary head
On thankless, prayerless bed.

Hast thou no pining want, or wish, or care,
That calls for holy prayer?
Has thy day been so bright,
That in its flight
There is no trace of sorrow?
And art thou sure to-morrow
Will be like this and more
Abundant? Dost thou lay up store
And still make place for more?
Thou fool, this very night
Thy soul may wing its flight.

Hast thou no being than thyself more dear,
Who tracks the ocean deep,
And when storms sweep
The wintry, lowering skies,
For whom thou wakest and weepest?
Oh, when thy pangs are deepest,
Seek thou the covenant ark of prayer,
For He that slumbereth not is *there*,
His ears are open to thy cries—
Oh, then on prayerless bed
Lay not thy thoughtless head.

Hast thou no loved one than thyself more dear,
Who claims a prayer from thee?
Some who ne'er bend the knee
From Infidelity?
Think if by prayer they're brought,
Thy prayer to be forgiven,
And making peace with heaven,
Unto the Cross they're led—
Oh, for their sakes, on prayerless bed
Lay not thine unblest head.

Arouse thee, weary soul, yield not to slumber,
Till in communion blest
With the elect thou rest,
Those souls of countless number,—
And with them raise
The notes of praise,
Reaching from earth to heaven,—
Chosen, redeemed, forgiven:
So lay thy happy head
Prayer-crowned, on blessed bed.

The recognition of the omnipresence of the Deity and his minute supervision and direction of all events, which is essentially connected with the due performance of prayer, was an operative principle in Miss Mercer's faith, inwrought with the very texture of her soul, and influencing her in every action of her life. It was not only the conviction that God was about her path and about her bed, spying out all her ways, but the feeling of confidence in his protection was ever a source of comfort and support to her in her hours of trial, and added increased gratification to every joy. Great as were her cares, she cast them upon Him who cared for her, and found peace. It was not only as a ground for trust and comfort that she held this doctrine, but as an incentive to duty, and she regarded each event so ordered of God, that she could not avoid a duty which was thrown in her way by the so-called chances of life. Many circumstances might be mentioned illustrative of this. Thus, on one occasion she writes: "My housemaid, the tall sibylline figure you must have noticed, has been taken with distressing fits, which indicate equally a disordered mind and body. She has, it seems, been not perfectly honest, and having lately been converted after their fashion, the horrors of a disturbed conscience, nervous constitution, and great natural pride, affect her in such a way, that I am apprehensive of her losing her senses. Of course she is an

object of terror to the children, without their comprehending the nature of her dreadful contortions and dismal groanings. I do not know where to bestow her, and she has no friends to whom I may send her, and yet it may please Him who is to be with us always, to make us *here* the ministers of mercy to cast out this evil spirit, and I dare not abandon a fellow-creature thus committed to my protection. How many offices of humanity one *may* perform." Thus, what others might have done from mere feelings of compassion, or even with reluctance, as a duty which could not be thrust aside, became with her an occasion for the exercise of faith in the promised blessing of a Saviour's presence. The cup of water was given in his name and for his sake, and the wretched outcast with "no friends" became the representative of him who hath said, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these, ye did it unto me."

It was from the impulse of a kindred feeling she was led to take under her protection a poor vagrant boy, whose destitute appearance attracted her attention on board a steamboat. Entering into conversation with him, she found he was without friends, and she took him to her own home, clothed him, and placed him with a mechanic as an apprentice. Year after year she watched over him, with an interest not only not abated, but increased by his unsettled habits, which prevented him from profiting as he should have done by her efforts for his good. With

all his defects, he ever cleaved to her, and constantly returned to seek her protection, until at last he entered upon a whaling voyage, and was lost sight of. Whatever the result to him, even though her counsel and instruction should not prove to have been "seed cast upon the waters," found in the end to produce a harvest, yet she has not missed her reward in that blessed kingdom where she rests from her labour followed by her works. A similar, and perhaps still more striking instance occurred, in which she extended her protection to one who, bursting through the toils in which she had been entangled, took shelter under her protection, under circumstances which at first caused Miss Mercer to question the propriety of extending it. But after careful investigation she determined upon her course, influenced, as she remarked in a letter to a friend, by reverence for that precept of the law of Moses: "'Thou shalt not kill the *bird* that taketh refuge in thy house.' I cannot resign one, who so young, and really so interesting, has taken refuge with me from the wicked." The word of God was indeed the treasure from which she ever drew things new and old; and actions which in the common events of life are performed without any respect to principle, from mere habit or impulse, were with her the legitimate offspring of simple faith. The degree in which she entered into the feelings of the humblest persons connected with her, was especially interest-

ing. While she ever retained a self-respect and dignity of manner which forbade the slightest approach towards forward familiarity, all in her employ understood that she regarded their interests as much as her own, and was ever ready to extend to them counsel in their difficulties, help in their necessities, and sympathy in their sorrow. Instances of this trait of her character, small in themselves, but constantly recurring at every period of her life, are treasured up in the memory of the many recipients of her kindness. In a letter received from the Rev. G. Adie, rector of the Episcopal church at Leesburgh, who officiated regularly at the church at Belmont, after its erection, and who was for years in habits of almost daily intercourse with her, he relates the following incident, which may serve as an example of her warm and active sympathy with the most destitute around her, and the humility with which she performed offices of kindness in their behalf.

"Some five years since, I received a message from Miss Mercer, requesting me to attend at the Episcopal church in this place at a specified hour, to perform the burial service over the remains of an aged dependant. She had never been in the employ of Miss Mercer herself, but a son and daughter were in her service. They were Irish, and very ignorant. I attended at the church at the hour appointed, and found the corpse and mourners there

in waiting. The body was still in the hearse, and Miss Mercer stood in front of the church, with the daughter leaning on her arm, and the big tears of sympathetic grief rolling down her cheek. Thus she walked with her servants to the grave of their mother, by looks, actions, and words administering consolation; and after the company had dispersed, I saw her with tears still in her eyes, speaking to the rustic daughter and still more rustic son, as a mother or sister, in words of sympathy and tenderness." Was not this an appropriate exercise of the grace inculcated in the precept of Him who said, 'If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet?'

The humility and gentleness of Miss Mercer's character, thus exhibited, were so remarkable, that it would appear impossible for any other feeling to dwell in the same bosom. But whilst love was the influential, all-pervading principle by which her actions were regulated, and from which they sprung, there was no lack of that energy of mind, that dauntless courage, and determined adherence to right, which is generally considered the attribute of a masculine mind, and supposed incompatible with the delicate refinement which was the most prominent feature in her character. At an early period of her Christian life, she writes to her cousin, Miss Hunter: "I verily believe that, though often thrown back by pride, vanity, and, above all, by my

besetting sin, *anger*, yet I am under the discipline of God's own hand, and the atonement is all-sufficient. Ah! who does not feel the need of a Redeemer? I know I never practised what I was conscious was wrong, and yet how far below my own standard is my life and conduct?" Miss Hunter remarks: "This besetting sin, anger, which she mentions, would give the reader a very false idea of her temper, if they understood these words *au pied de lettre*. Like most persons of generous disposition and ardent feelings, her temper was naturally warm and quick, but perfectly devoid of all peevishness and resentment, and her indignation was aroused rather at what offended her high and pure ideas of religion and morality, than from any of those personal causes which usually excite anger. Oppression, insincerity, any thing tending to subvert the true and the good, always aroused her indignation and resistance, and in a righteous cause she was capable of evincing that high degree of moral courage, that unflinching fortitude which are generally thought to be masculine rather than feminine attributes."

There was one friend to whom Miss Mercer was strongly attached, and to whom she wrote with much freedom; who, though possessed of an intellect of a high order, and affections of the warmest kind, was yet liable to a nervous affection, which caused great affliction both to her friends and herself, amounting at times to entire alienation of a

mind naturally vigorous. Near neighbours when at home, circumstances often separated them. The following extracts from the letters of Miss Mercer show the warmth of her sympathies and her readiness to impart consolation or instruction, as the case of her friend might require. She thus addressed her on the occasion of the sudden death of a mutual friend:—

"I have been for some time hoping that I should have the gratification of hearing from you, but had I had any thing pleasing to communicate, I should have been tempted to write without. Now that the severe and sudden affliction which it has pleased an all-wise Father to send upon you has opened every source of sympathy, I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of commencing. I know but too well that there are trials in which God says to every days-man who would come between Him and the creature suffering under his rod, 'Stand by and let me speak;' and blessed indeed is the soul which, while melted in this strong fire, receives the perfect and indelible impression for which it is purposely softened.

"In reflecting on the painful occurrence from which I know your dear mother and yourself will suffer so deeply, I have hoped you would draw much consolation from the certainty that to her it was evidently a most merciful dispensation. If I was asked to choose a desirable fate, I would say, give me health, competence, and ease, with a *cultivated un-*

*derstanding*, an equal temper, and sanctify them all by *enlightened*, pious, active devotion, and end this blessed life by a sudden death."

This "cultivation of the understanding" was highly prized by Miss Mercer; and while few equalled her in warmth of affection or intensity of feeling, she ever strove to attain to higher degrees of intellectual elevation, so that with her mental development, spiritual growth advanced simultaneously. Indeed, the improvement of her mind was regarded as much a privilege as a duty, and was undertaken with the desire to promote the glory of Him from whom its powers are derived. Miss Hunter, in speaking of this, says:

"It is highly interesting, not only in a Christian, but in a psychological point of view, to trace the progress of her spiritual and intellectual development as connected together and mutually acting on each other. The progress of mind in her case was not confined to an acquisition of knowledge and experience, an increase of the treasures of thought as relating only to the intellect, but every new ray of mental light was accompanied with a brighter illumination of moral and religious truth. An intimate acquaintance with her would have been a sufficient refutation of the vulgar error, that the mind is narrowed in proportion as it is brought under the influence of strict religious principle and feeling. Consistency, elevation and determination of purpose, a

steadier and more enlightened view of the great ends of human existence, combined with that glorious liberty of mind which arises from the constant habit of referring to the word of God as a standard of opinion and action, without regard to the opinion of man, are the natural accompaniments of real religious progress; and to all who knew Miss Mercer intimately, these blessed and genuine fruits of Christianity were plainly evident in her life and character. She knew and admitted that claim in the first law of holiness, which is so often overlooked, even by pious persons: she loved the Lord her God with all her *mind*, as well as with all her soul, with all her strength, and with all her heart."

Yet energetic as was her mind, and diligent as were her efforts to attain to the utmost degree of development of intellectual power within her reach, she could also appreciate and cultivate that retirement of feeling in which the spirit turns in upon itself, and seeks in quietness to know its own condition, without much active exercise of thought. Thus, in writing to the friend whose afflictions have been alluded to, she says: "I have been staying at home for a week in perfect solitude. If, as I am well persuaded from observation, as well as from sacred instruction, the ties of social life were, and are, and must be essential to man's nature, I am no less certain that it is necessary that we should commune with our hearts in our own chambers, and be

still. I would not give the effect, even for present comfort, which this season of retirement has had on my heart and mind for all that I could gather in years of bustling activity in the world. But, alas! this soothing balm, poured over the weary and harassed spirit, cannot be always enjoyed. Duty forbids it; and even the restless energies of our nature are no sooner recruited by repose, than they must again 'be up and doing.'" Thus, in all circumstances she found lessons of wisdom. After referring to other matters, she exhibits the strength of her affection:—"Many and strong as my ties are, still there are few of my connexions—may I not say none?—from whom through life I have derived so much and so unalloyed pleasure as from you. I remember, with swelling heart and a full eye, that when I came home young, impetuous, and incautious, open to censure on every side, you received me with a warmth of affection which has never varied in fifteen years, through health and through sickness, through weal and through wo. I wish I could send you the tear that is falling over this thought, for never was a more genuine tribute paid to generous affection,—the tear I have brushed away, but the feeling is as permanent as the expression is transient." And this was no empty declamation, as was proved by a continuance of the warmest friendship and truest sympathy through twenty additional years, in each of which that friend drank

more and more deeply of the chalice of affliction. After one of these seasons of distress, Miss Mercer thus greeted a letter from her:—

"You can hardly imagine, my dear friend, how much pleased I was to see once more your handwriting; and although I am much distressed to find you sad, yet it is a great privilege to have a letter from you. I think of you every hour at this season, because I know so well what enjoyment you have in the return of the floral months,—enjoyments, however, which belong to the spring-time of our lives, when the senses are peculiarly alive to pleasure, and which naturally decay with our years. For my own part, I find every year the bloom of my flowers seems to produce less effect upon my sight, and they become graver and more solemn, though affectionate mementoes of the rapid passage of this troubled span.

"I went yesterday into the graveyard, and the violets which I had planted with my own hands, close to the head of my mother's grave, had spread all around, and the ground was enamelled with them. Thus it is that God has ordained that forms of being, which belong solely to the material creation, shall be much more permanent and unperishable, than that burden of dust, which ties down the spiritual being to an unnatural state, if we may so express ourselves. How confused are all our perceptions, while afflicted by this incongruous union of a

material and spiritual being. And yet this is the only means which we can conceive of making us acquainted with the high perfections of that state, in which we are to have celestial bodies eternal in the skies, and leading us to long to lay down this body of sin and death, and rise incorruptible and immortal. Oh, my dear friend, how much does it console me, when I grieve for the afflictions of your present state, and think how the heaven-born spirit is darkened by the veil of flesh, to look forward to meeting you at the mercy seat of Him who overcame the flesh by His precious death, and opens his tender arms to all that mourn. Mental diseases and afflictions are the severest trials of our probationary state, and one is sometimes amazed at the mysteriousness of God's providence when they behold His most faithful servants passing away from the earth under such clouds. But even here we must remember the blessed Jesus on the cross, and with David say, 'This is my infirmity;' and with Job, 'Though He slay me, yet will I trust in him.' . . . . . The *Man* who gave up the ghost, saying: 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' is now at the right hand of the throne, most high in the glory of God the Father. Sacred, mysterious lesson of humility and patience! Job did not receive double in earthly treasures as the reward of his faith. Though he had died scraping his sores with a potsherd, he would have been the same Job in the sight

of God, and like Lazarus have been carried into Abraham's bosom by exulting angels. Let me entreat you then still, my precious friend, to try to keep this in view, even when the light of His countenance is turned from you, and the Prince of this world comes in the power of darkness and despair. Remember that to whom you deliberately give yourself, to Him you belong, and still the troubled waters of your soul with the recollection of his love and his sufferings, who was worthy to be accepted as a full oblation and propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Do not look upon the thorn in the flesh, which we all bear in the body of sin and corruption, as the sin of the spirit. Cast all your cares and fears upon Him, and know for a certainty, whether you can at all times see it or not, that He is almighty to save, and that *none ever desired to be saved by Him*, and were rejected. If any have said they desired it, and have not mourned over a broken and contrite heart, they lied unto Him with their lips, and deceived Him with their tongues. They were mere lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, and wished not to see his holiness, his righteousness, but had some vague earthly notions of inheriting a sensual heaven, like their earthly imaginations. This is not you. What are your prayers, but for holiness and conformity to God? This is what *He* desires, and you shall yet enjoy your desires; therefore, my dear, dear friend, try to keep it in mind. The cloud

is over *your eyes*, but the Sun of God is shining bright upon you—you shall yet see it, and though you walk through the valley of the shadow of death, fear no evil, for God is *there*, and God is *love*."

There was ever a sweetness and gentleness in the tones of her consolation, and a rich power in the themes she chose, upon which to dwell, which gave additional strength to the effort she put forth to lead the souls of those who mourned or suffered to that state of resignation in which only peace can be found.

It is easy for such as have never known sorrow to sit down, whilst themselves enjoying all the blessings of Providence, and preach to others the propriety of submission to the Divine will. It is another thing to feel this submission in our own case; and, not inexperienced, to draw them to a source of consolation of which we have ourselves tasted, and of which we have proved the power to heal, and sanctify. It was from deep personal experience Miss Mercer wrote. She had herself, at this time, drunk deeply of the cup of sorrow, and the waves of affliction had rolled, in all their heaviness, over her soul. The one she had found, though grievous at the first, yielding peaceful fruits of righteousness, and she had experienced the power of Jesus to speak to the other, and cause the tempest to subside into a great calm. It was, therefore, with experimental power that she strove to lead her friend to the same holy

submission, the sweet influence of which she had so eminently proven. At another time she thus addressed the same friend:

"My dear Friend,—

"This morning I am thirty-three years old! How short seems the time since I wept bitterly to think I was sixteen, and so deficient as I felt myself. More than an equal period has elapsed, and I would weep again even more bitterly, had I not meanwhile discovered that there is a sufficiency for man's insufficiency, and that all that we can acquire by our best services, is a consciousness that we are unprofitable servants, and a devoted confidence in Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, who is able to save all who will be saved. Oh, merciful Saviour of a sinful world, let me never have any other hope or desire but to be forgiven for my Redeemer's sake, to be cleansed by His atoning blood, to glory in His cross, and to say in spirit and in truth, I am altogether worthless and of unclean lips; there is no truth in me. But thou art true and faithful to forgive all my sins and to heal all my infirmities. You, my ever dear friend, have gone through a fiery furnace of affliction, but I fear you have never yet, even in your sound moments, realized the nature of that sustaining faith which renders it impossible for the believer to sink where the reason is unimpaired. Can you not, my dear, dear,

Miss ——, acquire that meek and contrite sense of the utter inability of man to do any thing; of the utter insignificance of our own being and nature, so as to confess that you are not worthy so much as to pick up the crumbs from your Father's table? Nothing, depend upon it, is acceptable in His eyes but the spirit of Lazarus, whose sores the dogs came and licked. Had that poor sufferer resented even this act of compassion, and rebelled against even this degree of degradation, he would have been no happier in his fate than the rich man who wore purple and fine linen. Do not misapprehend my meaning, and suppose for an instant that I am not sensible of the peculiar sufferings to which you are exposed from bodily disease and nervous irritability; but the will of a rational creature, I must ever think, is independent of outward circumstances, and the will can and ought to submit itself implicitly to the will of God. 'Let God be true, and every man a liar.' We have no right, in self-defence, to impute to him conduct which He denies; and let us take care that we be not found fighting against God, when we say He tries us above that which we are able to bear. 'Are not my ways equal, are not your ways unequal?'

"Now, my precious friend, I am as confident as I am of my existence, that the moment you will submit the pride of the flesh, as a willing sacrifice at the foot of the Cross, and will say, I will '*joy in tribulations*,' I will '*die daily*,' that being 'crucified

with Christ, I may also rise with him ;' that moment, the fiends of remorse and despair which now haunt you, will be 'cast out,' never to possess your soul again. My friend, love me, believe me when I say to you, 'Trust in the goodness of God.' 'Resist the devil,' by the grace of God which is freely given to all who ask it, and he will 'flee from you.'"

Some further extracts from letters to her friends will illustrate the state of her religious feelings.

"But alas, alas! what is the world with all its fleeting show? 'There is nothing true but heaven.' 'Oh, man, place not thy happiness in this life,' was the affecting exclamation of the virtuous, the wise, the powerful monarch, who, beloved by his subjects and respected by himself, numbered fourteen happy days of life. Religion, such as Abdulrahman did not possess the advantage of, is certainly the only source of perfect happiness. But when shall religion obtain the perfect sway which places us above the world, like the eminences which are scattered over the face of the globe. We often, by strong impulses and efforts, attain a point from which all earthly concerns seem to be vanishing from our view. But prone to action, we presently descend again from our height, to mix in the grovelling herd. Happy they who can *fix* their eyrie in such lofty scenes, and only descending to the earth for the support of their mortal existence, find all their pleasure in soaring sublime where God alone abides.

For myself, I am so weary of the imperfections of my nature, the constant failures where I had thought myself most safe, that I am ready to lay my head in the dust and cover it with the ashes of contrition."

"The hermitess of Cedar Park sends this to her beloved friend, greeting. Yes, my dear cousin, at last I have accomplished the wish of my heart, and alone with my reconciled God, I am enjoying a rest for my weary spirit. Long, too long have the whirlwinds of human passions made me their sport; and now that I am freed from the bonds which social connexions weave around our hearts, I feel as if life had been one long troubled dream or a horrid nightmare, and I had just awoke and satisfied myself that my real existence held out the promise of a pure serene sky and a quiet rest. I have been now five days without beholding the face of a human creature except the servants, until the doctor came in for a moment this evening. I am in really good health, such as I never hoped to enjoy, as good as any body's. I live temperately, read good books, and have even gone back to my youthful tastes, read Cymbeline with delight, and have experienced that sensation which the French call being '*emu*,' from reading the Allegro once more, in a degree that I never felt it from poetry before. Yet, is this sweet serenity not the consequence of indulging in these pleasures of imagination, but the taste for the pleasures is produced by the serenity of the mind; and the se-

renity is the Spirit of God moving on the deep, and saying to the waves, 'Peace, be still.' What time this happy calm may last, I fear to think. I am so in love with it that I could almost be tempted to wish, like Cowper, that

'Rumour of the world might never reach me more;'

for except in the connexion with my beloved Essex friends, I may truly say that human affections have ever been the fruitful source of unhappiness, and that in proportion as they have been strong, they have always been afflicting to me. Hopes seem contrived like the steps of a ladder, placed against the heavens, which as we pass ardently on, looking from one to another, are drawn silently out beneath our feet, until when we stop, weary and discouraged, and would return whence we came, we find a chasm no more to be retraced. Every stay has vanished that we firmly relied on, and our only chance of safety seems to be in reaching the ultimate goal where we may find rest for our fainting souls. Yet how long is it, even after reaching this point, before we approach near enough to be completely weaned in our affections, and intent only upon the bright prospect before us. Prone to the earth, the flesh weighs down our imperfect spirits, and if it were not for the gracious mercy of Providence in thus as it were cheating us into our salvation, how few would reach the mansions of the accepted in God.

"I do not mean when I speak of the serenity I

am enjoying, to deceive you into the idea that no cares, no painful anxious feelings and reflections intrude even here. 'Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward,' and as we are heirs of peace and joy through the death of Christ, so while in the flesh will we find that we are heirs also to the imperfections and the miseries of humanity. Often, too often indeed, from the ardour of our natural impulses, the strength of our imaginations and the weakness of our judgments, we involve ourselves in pains and perplexities which we can scarcely refer to our fate. But even then, when the intentions are pure, honest, and generous, we have a *Father*, who seeth our weakness, and provides for our safety. I never but once in my life suffered the agitation of mind which I have gone through since last summer; but when it pleases God to carry us through trials in which human aid cannot avail us, He seems to place us out of the reach of every earthly dependence, and

> "'When thus humbled,
> When to our feeble natural powers resigned,
> 'Tis then we own this universal truth,
> That God is all in all, and man is nothing.'

"The storm has passed in its power, and my house still stands, 'for it was built upon a rock.' But I hear ever and anon the distant rushing of the tempest's wing, and I tremble with the dread of its return; for, indeed, I am too humble with the sense

of my own weakness to feel any security, until 'I stand in His own likeness in the presence of God.' How blessed even for this life is the injunction to 'press forward to the mark for the prize of our high calling, not looking to the things which are behind.'"

Such was the habitual state of her heart, and thus, by the strength of her reasoning, the beauty and force of her illustrations, and the appropriate elegance of unpremeditated expression, she exhibited a character worthy of all admiration.

In nothing, except by the actual prevalence of moral degradation, is the ruin brought upon the creation by "man's first disobedience," so strikingly exhibited as it is by the impossibility of arriving at certain, positive, unquestioned results, by any process of reasoning. Turn we to what branch of human knowledge we may, we find the loftiest intellects still debating and doubting; or if individuals have arrived at a certainty satisfactory to themselves, where do we find unity of conviction on the part of the many fellow-investigators of the same subject? Even when for a time a master mind appears, and carries with it the throng, who are followers, only because content not to think for themselves, the moment another teacher arises, the crowd diverges into the new track, or divides. When the same result is arrived at, how often does the imperfection of language, man's highest attainment, produce mis-

conception, and give rise to controversy. Every branch of human knowledge—the science of government, law, medicine, is liable to this remark. Even those which are the subjects of direct observation, as astronomy, natural philosophy, chemistry, are not exempt. If such be the case in matters within the scope of our understanding, how presumptuous is it to suppose that our finite faculties are able to comprehend all the mysteries of the dealings of the Creator with the works of his hand. The language of Dryden is aptly descriptive of the relation which reason bears to revelation.

> "Dim as the borrowed light of moon and star
> To weary, way-worn, wandering traveller,
> Is reason to the soul. And as on high
> These rolling fires discover but the sky,
> Not light us here, so reason's ray
> Serves not to assure us on our doubtful way,
> But guide us upward to a *better day*."

It is, however, upon this reason that the better day must shine, and through its instrumentality are effected the great purposes of the Spirit of God. While, therefore, in the wisdom of God, the grand fundamental principles of revealed truth are so plain, that, to use its own illustration, the wayfaring man, though a fool, cannot err in the way of salvation, it is but reasonable to expect just that divergency of thought, and discrepancy of opinion on points of inferior moment, which observation of man has taught us to exist in every age of the church. How

few are there, even among that small number universally recognised as possessed of the loftiest intelligence and purest faith, who have not held opinions on some points from which others equally great and equally good, have differed. Man is thus taught a lesson of humility, as regards his own powers, and of charity towards the opinions of other, which he is slow to receive and act upon. This infirmity of reason was manifested in Miss Mercer's case, and she was led by it to the adoption of some views on theological subjects, essentially different from those held by any known sect of Christians, and with her wonted energy of character she devoted herself with the utmost assiduity to the investigation of the Scriptures, which she recognised as the only standard by which truth in religion could be tested, in order to sustain her principles. Not satisfied with this, she undertook the study of Hebrew, in order to draw, as she thought, more purely from the fountain head; and devoted herself with untiring zeal to the preparation of an essay on her peculiar opinions, which extended to some two hundred pages, and was carefully prepared for the press, having been a fourth time copied with her own hand.

Her every power of heart and intellect was completely absorbed in this subject; scarce a letter was written at the time, without some allusion to it. "If it were possible," she says at one time, "I should rejoice to think that I was never to go be-

yond sight of that little enclosure,* where will shortly repose silent, low in beds of dust, those who loved me first, last, midst, and I devoutly trust, without end. I am deeply engrossed at present in an inquiry, by which I suppose I must bring on myself much odium, and consent that some of 'my admirers should be removed far from me.' However, let that be; I would willingly compound to bear the world's reproach to advance a good end, and this I have so much at heart that I feel as though faith could remove mountains. If I can succeed, the labour will yet be one of months; but it makes me happy. I think of nothing else; I am pondering it in my bed, and writing or reading every spare moment through the day. Sometimes I find myself lost in the contemplation of the sublime whole; sometimes bewildered in the minute branching of the subject. However, if I devote my life to it, it will never tire me." At another time she says: "A laborious business it is, but I am so convinced that it is very important to the interests of religion, that I am as bad as old Mause Hiedelrig, who would 'hold up her testimony to the last.' However, don't you take advantage of the unfortunate coincidence of names, and dub me 'old Mause,' for I shall have enough to contend with, and expect

* A family burial-place in the grounds at Cedar Park. The letter was written in the interval between the death of her father, and the removal of his remains from Philadelphia.

nothing less than that the Protestant bishops will apply to the Pope for a bull of excommunication against me." And again she says: "Since you left, Mr. —— has lightened my heart of a considerable load by his liberal treatment of my opinions, as it is a great satisfaction to know that the best Christians find nothing offensive, when they come to hear all. I should be governed by his moderate and prudent counsel, were I not urged on by motives paramount to all human considerations. 'If it be not of God, it will come to naught;' if it be, I must not be found resisting his will, which certainly it would be, to yield conscience to human authority."

And yet it was by these "moderate and prudent counsels," and this "liberal treatment of her opinions," that she was influenced. A less experienced and sincere Christian than Mr. ——, by hasty condemnation and opposition would have kindled the natural determination of her character into a resistless flame, and instead of a life of usefulness, in training souls for glory, and honour, and immortality, the whole energy of her character would have been wasted in a futile attempt to establish an opinion of her own, which would have necessarily arrayed in hostility to her the advocates of every known Christian sect. Bishop Johns writes of her religious opinions as follows:

"With regard to Miss Mercer's sentiments on

the subject of revealed truth, I have reason to know that some twenty years since, she was inclined to adopt and maintain views on certain speculative points which neither you nor I could approve, and which it was to be feared might have had an unhappy influence on her religious character and course. I always ascribed this strange obliquity to the powerful excitement of her sympathies, which, for a time at least, seemed to bring her strong intellect into subjection, and made it work in captivity to her natural feelings. She was then possessed with the vast importance of what she regarded as new light, and flattered herself that it would remove some of the serious difficulties in the way of the progress of religion. At the period to which I refer, she was pleased to submit to my inspection a long and laboured essay on the points alluded to, from publishing which I endeavoured to dissuade her. Her good sense and self-control determined her to restrain her own inclination in deference to the unanimous counsel of friends in whose judgment she had confidence. The essay was suppressed, and from that time I never heard her allude to the views it contained; nor should I, but for the correspondence which had passed between us, have supposed for a moment that such views had ever been regarded by her with even transient favour. In all my subsequent intercourse I found her the earnest, able advocate of that system of doctrine which we hold to be evangelical,

and which distinguishes the writings of Romaine, Newton, Scott, and Wilberforce,—the doctrines of grace as set forth in our thirty-nine articles. These were her sustenance and strength, effectually inwrought in her experience, and beautifully illustrated in her consistently holy conversation and useful life; and as they animated her own soul in the cause of Christian duty, so on them she relied in her unwearied efforts to educate others for the service of God on earth, and for his presence and glory in heaven. She has finished that course with signal honour and triumph, and received her crown; and hereafter, I doubt not, will be recognised in the order of those who, having turned many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever."

That the defective opinions now referred to, did not at all involve the great fundamental truths of revelation, neither diminishing her estimate of the *entire ruin* of man by the fall, nor her appreciation of the necessity of *divine intervention* for the restoration of our race from the consequences of sin, must be evident to all who read the exposition of her views on these subjects, in her correspondence with her friends. That she worshipped constantly, and from choice, according to the mode prescribed by the Protestant Episcopal Church, proves her approbation of the doctrines and discipline of that church; nor did she hesitate to avow her increasing attachment to its services. With several of its

bishops and many of its members she maintained an uninterrupted intercourse; and one of the latest efforts of her life was made to secure the services of Bishop Meade, for whose character she had the highest reverence, in the confirmation of her pupils, led through her instrumentality to consecrate themselves to the service of the Lord Jesus. To the liturgy and other offices for public worship, she was deeply attached, and often expressed the increasing delight with which she united in them. And the edifice erected by her untiring zeal, and by her own desire consecrated to the worship of God according to the usages of the Episcopal Church, will stand as a permanent witness to her soundness in the fundamental principles of our faith.

Some of the expressions of the letters recently introduced afford sufficient evidence that we have now reached a period in the history of Miss Mercer at which the circumstances by which she was surrounded, and under the influence of which the graces of her character had been developed, were to undergo an entire change. The reality of her faith was to be tested, and its strength invigorated by the storms of adversity—and this, not for a short period only, but the continued pruning of the heavenly husbandman was to render more perfect, and increase the fruit, by which she gave evidence of abiding in the vine.

The death of her father, which took place at

Philadelphia, where she had accompanied him with the design of seeking the advice of Dr. Physick, proved a crisis in her life; and from this time we are to trace her course no longer amid the pleasant scenes of affectionate intercourse with attached friends and relatives, but amid the buffetings of the storm which beat unceasingly around her later pathway through life. But, says Miss Hunter, "In all the most afflictive bereavements which she suffered, not a murmur was ever heard from her lips, nor any of those complaints of peculiar trial, which are often indirect accusations against the love or justice of our Creator. She considered it a duty, not only to say but to feel, and to show, also, that she felt, that all events are disposed by Him who ordereth all things well, and it was one of the most lovely and endearing traits of her character, that her own sorrows did not make her forgetful of the feelings of her friends, nor prevent her sympathy with their joys and sorrows." She writes at this time to Mrs. Garnet:

"I have been wishing every day, my beloved cousin, to write to you, but you know the state of languor consequent upon great excitement. At the moment I felt most forlorn, I requested that some one would write to you, and my aunt kindly undertook the office. Since that, I have been harassed by travelling, anxiety, and other causes; yet I ought to have written to you when I could have afforded

you the satisfaction of hearing that my own health, so far from suffering, has recruited amidst all my trials. I make it a principle of duty never unnecessarily to rake up the ashes of a buried sorrow, and to bury every sorrow that may interrupt the happiness of others. The loss is mine peculiarly—all around me have hopes and occupations from which they derive their enjoyment and their support. I am (for myself) constantly reminded of the fable of the leaf:

'De la tige detachée
Pauvre feuille dessechée,
Ou va tu? Je n'en sais rien—
L'orage a frappé le chêne,
Qui seul etait mon soutien,
Depuis ce temps je me promene,
Ou le vent me mêne.'

"But the wind that conducts me is the power of the God of heaven and earth, and although tossed painfully upon the storms, I know there is a prosperous breeze in store to carry me safe into the harbour of eternal rest.

'Je vais ou va toute chose—
Ou va la feuille de rose,
Et la feuille de laurier.'

"And nothing is vain—no care, no grief, no long-protracted misery, or rapid reverse of fortune are lost in the providence of Him who maketh the evil work for good."

There could be neither reason nor propriety in the invasion of the sacred precincts of private life to exhibit before a larger circle of observers the events which produced this change in her circumstances. It is sufficient to allude to them merely as links in that chain by which God in his own way, often high above our comprehension, is accomplishing his purpose of mercy to his creatures. As not only clouds and darkness, but storms and tempests, even in the physical world, produce increased blessing, more than sufficient to balance the evils which more immediately follow their occurrence, so in the accomplishment of the work of grace, whether in the individual soul, or, through its instrumentality, in the world around, everlasting good is continually produced as the direct result of temporal evil. "He maketh even the wrath of man to praise him," from seeming evil still educing good. But though we may not lift the veil to gaze upon the proper lineaments of the portrait, it may be permitted me to declare, that had her faith been of that spurious kind which passes current with the world, but produces little fruit to God's glory—had not her disinterested self-renunciation been of a character but rarely seen, and her integrity perfect in its actings and lofty in its conceptions, she had it in her power to have secured to herself the means by which she would have been placed far above the necessity of any personal exertion or self-denial, without the

slightest sacrifice of integrity in the esteem of the world. She not only had that faith which looks not at the things which are seen, but at those which are unseen and eternal, but the consciousness also of the possession of faculties which had been conferred upon her for purposes of blessing to her fellow-creatures, and glory to the Giver; and renouncing her well-established rights, and abandoning all consultation with personal ease and comfort, she entered at once upon a path beset with circumstances of vexation and trial, and leading over heights of difficulty, from the encountering of which, nature would certainly have shrunk. It was known to but few of those who are familiar with the subsequent course of Miss Mercer, that no necessity thrust her down from a position of ease and affluence and urged her to undertake her arduous duties; but that it was the result of a lofty impulse of upright, honourable principle, such as is rarely witnessed in the world.

There is no record of the struggles of feeling which must have been experienced, beyond occasional expressions of a general character in letters to her friends; but a feeble state of bodily health afforded sufficient evidence of what was passing within, and might easily have furnished an apology to herself and others for seeking her own ease and comfort.

Her first effort was made by leaving the home of

her affections, the place of her nativity, and the scenes whose loveliness had given them a hold on her heart, which no length of separation ever had power to detach or even loosen, and assume the duties of a teacher of drawing and painting in the school of her relative and highly valued friend, Mrs. Garnet, of Virginia. Having chosen her path, there was no indulgence in useless murmuring or repining, no disposition to seek her own comfort or stipulate for all the privileges in her power to attain. An only daughter, an object of idolatrous affection to a fond father and brother, she abandoned not only the luxuries but the comforts of her station, with the simple request, that if it were convenient in making arrangements for her reception, her chamber might be shared, if possible, by the younger children, her habit of devoting a considerable portion of the night to study, rendering them less objectionable companions than those who were older. Yet, even in this, she is ready to submit her own comfort to the convenience of her friends. She thus describes her occupations, and the feelings incident to her new vocation, in a letter written soon after entering on her duties:

"You cannot imagine, my beloved friend, how grateful I felt on receiving your letter, to hear from you, to know you were better, to see your handwriting once more. It cheered me in my toils. I have not been separated from you in feeling for one

single hour, and I have been desiring a day or two of repose that I might devote to you and your dearest mother. But, indeed, you have very little idea of the life I lead. Saturday is as laboriously spent in working for the Liberian Society, as any other day in the week, and on Sunday we have a Sunday-School, in which I have my part, and so make out to employ every day fully. Drawing keeps me on my feet for six hours every other day, and at first it was truly bewildering to teach twenty-three children who did not know how to make a straight line. You are anxious to know all about me, and you see I am free in my communication: there are many encouraging circumstances in the mode of life I have adopted, *for those very things that are most painful prove how much there is to do;* and where there is much to do, steady laborious efforts to do good will doubtless be blessed, although we may in mercy be denied the luxury of seeing our work under the sun prosper. Mrs. G. is sometimes very much dispirited, at times without cause, for every little painful occurrence of misconduct in the children affords opportunity of more strenuously enforcing good principles. I never knew how to be thankful to my parents, above all to my God, for a good education, until I came to look into the state of young ladies generally."

And again, writing to the same loved friend, who had partaken with her of the joys she realized in

the residence of her childhood and youth, she says, "I wish I could give you any idea of the devotion of my heart to *home*. In the idea of home are connected all associations of early life, and all that remains of what I first learned to love. Your beloved mother is among the very dearest of all its objects. Daily I find my heart giving utterance to its emotions in the words of the favourite poet of my childhood:

> 'My heart untravelled fondly turns to thee,
> Still to my home returns with ceaseless pain,
> And drags at each remove a lengthening chain.'

My prayers, my dear friend, you always have; may it please God to manifest his power in restoring you to that healthfulness of spirit, which alone can render this troubled life endurable, and may the close of life be with us the gentle decline of the setting sun: may we go down together in peace to the grave of the earthly body, and rise in the morning of the resurrection joyful in the plentiful atonement and effectual mediation of our Lord and Saviour."

It is certain that her thoughts had often turned to the importance of female education for years before she entered upon it, and the same impulse which led her toward the close of her life to declare that she would not for the world abandon her employment, taught her, very soon after she realized the responsibility which attaches of necessity to the

possession of whatever powers we may be endowed with, to turn her attention to this subject, and in writing to Mrs. Garnet, of Elmwood, before entering herself into the same engagement, she says: "Do, my beloved, my revered cousin, let me hear from you. I would not exchange the pleasure of feeling that the friends to whom I am most devoted are distinguished for their active benevolence and Christian love of their fellow-creatures, not for any thing under heaven. Yesterday was our premium day at the Sunday School, and fifty children were made perfectly happy, as we managed to give all some little thing as an encouragement." And there is no doubt that the project to which she referred as filling her mind, and requiring so many hands to carry into execution, entertained before the occurrence of her father's death, was connected with female education in some manner.

The desire to be made instrumental in training souls for eternity, was the ruling motive by which she was influenced, and from the very first, her chief efforts were devoted to this great end, which was pursued without deviation throughout her whole career, though by no means to the neglect of those subsidiary acquirements which she esteemed as highly as any one could do, and laboured most unremittingly to communicate to her pupils.

Her connexion with Mrs. Garnet's school was not of long duration. Close as was her attachment

to the friends by whom it was conducted, the promptings of a desire to exercise as wide an influence for good as was within the compass of her powers, combined with the wish to contribute to the comfort of some members of her family especially dear to her, induced her to assume an independent position, and she announced to her friends her determination to convert the ancestral home at Cedar Park into an academy, expecting to receive but a limited number of pupils. Yet in the extensive circle of her acquaintance, so entire was the confidence in her powers and peculiar qualifications, that she at once received applications from more than she had designed taking under her care, and having after some difficulty secured the co-operation of suitable assistants, during the whole time that she continued her residence at West River, she had as many pupils as she could accommodate, even after the erection of an extensive addition to the original mansion.

Had her object in entering upon the duties of instruction been the acquisition of a pecuniary reward, or had she even admitted it as a secondary consideration into her plan, she had it in her power to attain it. But hers were loftier motives. It is true she had placed herself in a position which rendered it incumbent upon her to strain every nerve in order to meet the engagements into which she had voluntarily entered; for, not content with the aban-

donment of her own just claims, she had assumed the responsibilities of another: but beyond this, it may with safety be affirmed, that she never allowed a sordid feeling to enter into her plans. A simple, holy determination to devote herself to the service of God, in training the generations which were to come after, in the love and fear of their Creator and Redeemer, was the spring, from whose fount the perennial stream of her labours of love gushed forth with fertilizing power. Nor was she content with devoting *herself* to this noblest object to which the human mind can be applied. Among her friends was one of whom she declared that she loved him with all the affection of a brother, with whose high mental and moral qualification for this calling she was well acquainted—the late Daniel Murray, Esq., —to whom she thus addressed herself. ····"Next and last, for on this theme I should never have done, had I liberty to say all that my heart suggests, I bless my Saviour that He has made you, my dearly beloved friends, examples and pioneers in the way of Christian duty. It is impossible to express the emotions of my soul when it pleases God to make the steady light shining more and more to the perfect day, irradiate the whole path through which his servant moves. So far, he has worked in you, my dear Mr. Murray, 'to will and to do of his good pleasure.' May you never, never, in thought, or word, or deed, swerve for one instant from the ap-

pointed course of your high calling. This course is one of unwearied diligence, and my heart and mind have been more and more bent, for a long time now, upon your becoming the benefactor of mankind in undertaking a *Fellenberg* school. If I did not believe, that in rejoicing that God has shown *his own power* in guiding you, I am safe from any danger of being misunderstood, I would not say what I do. You know and I know where praise and honour belong. But I believe that, like your namesake of old, you are 'a man much beloved;' and feeling that you have freely received, I would urge you, my friend, to take it into serious consideration whether the peculiar circumstances under which you are at this moment placed by the providence of the All-wise do not seem to indicate your appointment to such a duty. When I think of your own children, the advantages which they would derive from such an undertaking, of the extent to which you would command the confidence of the public, and the infinite increase in future ages of that seed of righteousness which you might thus widely scatter, and thus deeply plant in the hearts of all our children, I feel as if I saw too plainly to doubt, the hand, that, releasing you from all the cares and anxieties attending upon a slave-holder,* affords you at once the opportunity of selecting a new mode of life and occupation. I heard the other day that General Wal-

* Mr. Murray had emancipated his negroes.

ter Jones had written to Mr. Fellenberg for a teacher, and that he wished a vast mansion which he has erected in a fine salubrious situation near Washington, to be devoted to that purpose. How I should rejoice to hear that you had there, or elsewhere, stationed yourself as the light on the hill to guide and guard the little children that Jesus loved through the gross darkness of this nether world. Just at this time, when the facilities for liberating our slaves are so rapidly increasing, the juncture has arrived for commencing an agricultural education for our boys. My dear Mr. Murray, if you carry such a plan into operation, you become the remote but positive instrument in releasing generations from slavery, who will ever be kept in bondage while labour is a degradation in the opinion of their masters."

Mr. Murray's reply can be recovered only by inferences from the following letter from Miss Mercer of a date soon after the last.

"Thanking you for your kind reply to my last presumptuous letter, I must stop to rejoice with you on occasion of your present joy. The omnipotent Father of mercies has you all under his charge, and I feel confident that all His gifts to you are blessings. But, my dear friend, is not this another motive to lay aside, (at the urgent persuasion of your friends,) that distrust of yourself, which deprives the world of your services, and your children of

such advantages as would certainly accrue to them from your coming into the plans of those who would perhaps never think their judgments superior to yours, but in a case in which you were to judge yourself. If I depended on my own opinions solely, I should not venture to suggest any thing farther, but admit that I might have been swayed by the partiality of long and most respectful friendship, but I have heard the subject discussed by those who were most capable of forming a just opinion; and I am again impelled to solicit your indulgence while I endeavour to combat that opinion of yourself, which, like many virtues, must be confined within the bounds of utility to preserve its character of virtue. I suppose, my dear sir, that we have no more right to undervalue the advantages which God has *bestowed* upon *ourselves*, than those with which he has endowed others of his creatures. To take too low views of our powers of usefulness is then a fault, and loath as you would be to institute comparisons between yourself and others, to their disadvantage, yet there are instances in which I believe it is a positive duty imposed upon us to do so, and this I think a perfectly legitimate one. Is it not very evident that such an institution is the most urgent want of our country? That the youth of the Southern States demand, especially at this time, the institution of such a system of education, as may prepare them for the great and good measures, the wisdom

and the virtue which are requisite to the safety and prosperity of those states. And in whom shall we find the man of birth, education, refined manners, honourable sentiments, and above all, religious principles, to devote this combination of commanding qualities with zeal, fidelity, and talent to this noble purpose, if you refuse? I am ashamed to use language to you which may appear like adulation, and am endeavouring to guard my pen against enthusiasm; but in sober earnestness, it is true that all the essential requisites of which you have spoken are yours, by capacity, if I may so express myself."

Not one sordid idea, not a suggestion of personal advantage, appears to have entered into her calculation of the benefits to accrue from the occupation of talent in this highest, noblest pursuit, to which human talent can be appropriated, and what she thought and felt, and urged upon her friend, was the living principle on which she acted herself. She looked abroad with the eye of a *patriot woman*, and felt with the ardent enthusiasm of one devoted to the good of her country, and especially that section of it in which her own lot had been cast by the overruling providence of the one Father of all who dwell on the face of the whole earth,—and planned and acted on, and urged others to act upon, the most disinterested schemes for the benefit of her country in the generations yet to come. Man admires, and must admire, while he has the sympathies of man,

the virtue which sacrifices life and all that makes life dear upon the altar of our country, and patriot is the highest grade in human estimation of human worth. Miss Mercer was a patriot woman, and lived and suffered and virtually bled and died in the service of her country. Serving it in a sphere of action the most important, yet too commonly the least esteemed. Standing at the very fountain of influence, and casting in there the healing branch which shall cause pure waters to flow over the wide domain. It is to the mothers of her sons, that our country looks for the impress that is to make them her great and her good men, her trusted and her honoured servants. To such women as Margaret Mercer would we trust the forming of the character of those who are thus to give character to our country when our part in the drama is performed, and we pass for ever from an interest in its actings. May her example stir others up to the like consecration of their powers. It is the female pass of Thermopylæ. The Salamis of a woman's ambition.

Allusion has been made to the difficulty encountered in procuring suitable teachers to assist in the school. A less important though still vexatious trouble arose from the necessity for supplying the place of the servants whom she liberated and sent to Africa, and she was sometimes compelled, in order to provide those necessary to the proper management of the domestic economy of her large

establishment, to purchase such as were slaves for life; and then giving them an equitable compensation for their labour, she afforded them an opportunity to redeem themselves; thus they were trained in habits of industry and economy which qualified them properly to estimate the value of the liberty they acquired, while they were fitted for the use and enjoyment of the boon. But in this as in all other concerns in which she was engaged, she ever regarded her own interest as secondary to that of others, and was ready to promote theirs even at the sacrifice of her comfort, and at no little personal inconvenience.

Among those thus brought into her household, was a coloured man named William Taylor, whose superior intelligence and lofty bearing attracted the attention not only of Miss Mercer, but of all who observed him. In speaking of him, one remarks, "his eye was as an open window, radiant with the light which shone out from his soul;" and another, "I never could look at him and ask him to serve me." Such an one could not fail to attract the attention, and enlist the feelings of Miss Mercer in his behalf, and his assiduous attentions in nursing the sick, suggested to her the idea of seeking a medical education for him, and sending him to minister to his emigrant countrymen in Liberia. Her own pecuniary circumstances were such as forbade her giving up to him the money she had expended

on his redemption; but she obtained for him access to the office of Dr. Lindsley, one of the professors in the Medical College in Washington city, in order that he might there prosecute his medical studies; and at the same time, by her recommendation of him to her friends, she secured the employment of his evenings as a waiter at entertainments during the session of Congress, by which he was enabled to support himself, and in part to remunerate her for her expense in his behalf. He proved worthy of the interest she had manifested in him, and during the period of his studies, and his subsequent residence in Africa, she kept up a constant correspondence with him. His letters to her are preserved, and exhibit a vigour of intellect, and steadfastness of purpose, and high-minded, honourable determination to pursue his course in defiance of serious obstacles, and great temptation, which exalt his character to a high rank. Miss Mercer's letters to him are unhappily lost, but it is evident from his replies that she entered into his feelings with sympathy, and afforded him counsel as to his course; her efforts were especially directed to the attempt to bring him under the influence of the Spirit of God, that he might minister to the souls of his fellows while exerting himself for the relief of their bodily diseases. He was three years devoted to study with Dr. Lindsley, during which he says, "Dr. Lindsley pay's me as much attention as he would any other

student; he teaches me Latin for nothing, gives me a recitation daily; and makes me perform all the ordinary operations, and takes me with him to see any important operations." And at another time: "Dr. L. constantly advises me, as you have done in your last letter, to lose no time, but devote it all to storing my mind with every kind of knowledge useful and improving. He has quite a good library, to which I have access at all times;" and just before sailing, he writes: "I feel, Miss Margaret, (not boasting,) that I shall be of some service in that Colony. I hope that I shall; I know, at all events, if I try to do good to my fellow-creatures, with a pure motive, that God will aid me, and thus assisted I have nothing to fear; and another thing I remember, that I shall have the prayers of all those who are sincerely interested in this matter, to help me on. In acquiring a knowledge of the profession of which I have made choice, I have had to labour under many and great difficulties, among the most prominent of which are a deficiency in knowledge of the construction of the English language, inaccuracy in spelling, want of capacity, and worst of all, want of application. So frequently I find myself reading that that does not profit, such as newspaper stuff, to the entire neglect of my proper study, that I am compelled to pass judgment on myself, and thus charge myself with the want of proper application. Though I have studied hard, I might have studied

harder; and I believe few students have read as many books in the same time. I have *studied*, (not read,) all the most important works the Doctor has. I have felt frequently the force of your advice in a former letter, to read every good book I could get. I have done so in a good degree, and one book I am now studying, which I am sure you are not ignorant of, is Mason on Self-knowledge."

Every effort was made to deter him from the fulfilment of his purpose. The most fearful pictures of the mortality among the emigrants were spread before him. To this he replied: "I shall persevere —what warrant have I, if I draw back, that I shall live as long here? God made the climate what it is." Some young men of colour, who were his companions in study, withdrew; and their success in other pursuits was represented to him as an inducement to follow their example, and letters to himself from disappointed colonists added to the force of the appeal. He met it all with, "I am, however, immovable. My purpose is fixed—I have the welfare of my fellow-men at heart, and at all hazards I will make the experiment. Under the smiles of our heavenly Benefactor, I shall not despair. The cause is good, my motive pure; with the approbation of Heaven, I have nothing to fear."

With such motives, feelings, and qualifications, he sailed for Liberia, where, after some three years of labour as a physician and missionary, he died;

not of the diseases incident to the climate, but of consumption, induced by exposure in founding a new missionary station among the heathen natives. He does not appear ever to have experienced regret at the course he pursued. After residing some time in the colony, he removed to an out-station, in order to devote himself to the evangelization of the heathen. The Rev. Mr. Seys prepared an obituary notice of him, which was published in Africa's Luminary, in which he speaks in high terms of Taylor's devotedness and usefulness. His last expression was one not of regret that he had devoted himself to the cause of Africa, and thus abridged his career of earthly existence; but of desire that he might have been permitted still to "lay hold upon the work," and help it forward.

Educated in the midst of slavery, and familiar with it under circumstances in which it displayed its least exceptionable features, Miss Mercer was fully convinced of the evils necessarily inherent in the system, and of the malign influence it exerts as well upon the master as the slave. She had, however, also, at the same time, full opportunity to observe the great difficulties with which the effort to get rid of the evil is environed, and was able to appreciate the obstacles which oppose the full development of the negro character in a country in which he has so long been kept in a state of degradation, and where he is compelled to contend with

habits and prejudices, not only inveterate from long continuance, but constantly excited into renewed vigour by the struggle ever maintained between distinct races of men dwelling on the same soil. She was convinced that circumstances over which the friends of the negro have no control, would keep him here in a state of thraldom and servitude, even though liberated from the galling chain of hopeless bondage. Yet none ever felt more deeply the evil of slavery; none ever more anxiously desired the coming of the time when the stain of it should be wiped from the scutcheon of our country; none ever made more disinterested self-sacrificing efforts than she to be delivered from its guilt. It was with such views and feelings she had hailed with delight the establishment of the American Colonization Society, an institution which she regarded as peculiarly adapted to the relief of both master and slave. Among its founders, none took a more prominent part than two of her most intimate friends, Francis Scott Key, Esq., and C. Fenton Mercer, Esq.,— with both of whom she was in frequent correspondence. It has become of late years the habit of too many of the abolitionists of our own country, to denounce, in terms of unsufferable harshness, as enemies of the negro and advocates of slavery, all who cannot adopt their own ultra views, nor engage in measures for the remedy of the evil of slavery which violate the Constitution of our country, threat-

en a dissolution of the Union, and are fraught with mischief alike to the master and the slave. Terms of contempt and abuse are hurled, with indiscriminate rancour, at the south and slaveholders, without regard to the circumstances which distinguish them from each other. Those who, without their own volition, find themselves, by the circumstances of their birth, involved in the toils of slavery, are included in the same wholesale denunciation with the most abandoned wretches who disgrace the name of man; and the opponent of slavery, who is so unhappy as to have his lot cast in the midst of it, is compelled, by a sense of justice to his neighbour, and abhorrence of the wrong done by these indiscriminate denunciations, to assume a position adverse to his wishes, and subject himself to the imputation of friendly feeling toward a system he abhors, and would fain see overthrown. Nor is this injustice confined to our own country. The same sentiment is re-echoed from the other side of the Atlantic, with a sound scarce diminished by the distance, though softened to our ears by the conviction that it is there uttered in ignorance of the character of those thus assailed, and of the circumstances in which they find themselves. By these mistaken friends of the negro, all who cannot sanction measures of the most radical kind, are branded as advocates of slavery, and accused of hypocrisy in the expression of feelings they do not possess, while

their real desire is said to be to remove from our country the free negro, in order to rivet more closely the bonds of the slave.

Bishop White, the advocate of slavery, and the hypocritical pretender to friendship for the negro, that he might the more firmly rivet upon him the galling chain of hopeless bondage! Bishop Meade, a participator in so nefarious a plot, though the emancipator of his servants! The very charge is so extreme, as to carry with it its own refutation to all who ever knew them; and yet Bishops White and Meade were the constant, ardent friends of African colonization, and that not only from the expectation of prospective benefit to Africa, but from an honest conviction of its benign influence upon her children here, in the land of their bondage and degradation.

But if there was no other evidence of the utter falsehood of the charge alleged against the friends of colonization, Margaret Mercer was during her life, and will be so long as her memory shall endure, a shining testimony of the fact that the society was countenanced in its origin and supported to the present hour by persons who were ready at any cost,—nay more, at any sacrifice of their own comfort,—to promote the good of those in whom they recognised the traits of common brotherhood, though "guilty of a skin not coloured like their own;" and the combined ranks of modern abolitionism, at home

and abroad, may with safety be challenged to produce a nobler spirit than that which burned within her bosom, and urged her on to untiring labours for the benefit of the slave. Its first act, was the emancipation of the slaves who came into her possession by the law of inheritance, and that under circumstances which compel us to class this act, without any figure of speech, with that of the widow so commended of our Lord: "She gave all she had, even all her living." Nor was this one fitful, spasmodic effort of impulse. We shall exhibit her own testimony to the solid principle on which it was founded,—a principle which knew no change, and which operated with undiminished power to the last. Only a few years before her death, a poor creature, who had been sold by his master to a southern trader, was dragged from his home, (and who will deny that home has its charms of association in even the uncultivated bosom of the degraded slave?) and passing in the stage by Belmont, exclaimed, "Ah! if Miss Mercer knew what I suffer, she would help me!" begging the driver to stop, and permit him to present an appeal to her charity, the reputation of which had reached him. This was denied him. But even the rugged spirit of the driver was moved, and on his return he mentioned the circumstance, so that it reached Miss Mercer's ear. She lost no time, but though without money herself, she at once borrowed three hundred dollars,

the sum necessary for his redemption, and hastened with it in person to the place to which he had been conveyed. It was, however, too late to effect her purpose, as he had already been transported beyond the reach of her charitable effort. Was this the action of one wishing "to remove the free negro from our own soil, only that the chain might be riveted the more firmly on those who remained?" One such action does more to soften the heart of the slaveholder, and open his eyes to the evil of slavery, and relax the thraldom of the slave, than all the angry denunciations and paper crusades of those who, without personal sacrifice, sit in selfish security by their own hearths, and fan into fury a flame which, once kindled, shall overleap all bounds, and whelm in common destruction the master and the slave. Miss Mercer's determination to transport to Liberia all her slaves who could be induced to go there voluntarily, originated in an honest, deeply-rooted opinion that their happiness would be promoted by the change, founded on the observation of instances, in which some, emancipated without that preparatory training necessary to qualify them to provide for themselves, fell into evil habits, which involved them in ruin. Such as refused to emigrate were emancipated here, and over those who went to Africa, she ever watched with the most anxious interest; and years after, she mentions the delight occasioned by the return of one, since "from him

she could learn the condition of the rest." Their own feeling of gratitude to her is beautifully exhibited by the fact, related by an eye-witness, that upon hearing a (false) report of her death, they all clothed themselves in the habiliments of grief.

Thus Mrs. Minor, who resided some years in Africa, relates:—"Upon my first arrival at Cape Palmas, there were many coloured people there who had been liberated by their kind mistress from the cruel shackles of slavery. They flocked to the mission house at Mount Vaughan, fresh in their sable weeds, and anxiously begging that I would give them some further information of 'Miss Margaret.' When they spoke of her death, I told them she was still living when I left America, and advised them to lay aside their mourning, (such as could be procured in the colony, black strings and crape bands.) This was indeed joyful news to them: one said, 'Write, madam, then, and ask her to send me just the side of her face in a picture;' and then followed such protestations of attachment for their dear 'Miss Margaret,' as would be too tedious to write. Upon my return, in the fall of 1844, I mentioned the above circumstance to Miss Mercer. She manifested much sensibility on the subject at first, and was deeply affected at this exhibition of feeling on the part of her too often despised friends; but soon recovering her elasticity of spirits, she talked freely on that subject ever

nearest her heart, and which I have heard her again and again say was to her mind the greatest cause on earth,—colonization of the free blacks. She was then the most interesting female I had ever seen; her countenance, manners, and conversation portrayed the beauty of her ever-active mind; and I left her saying to myself, 'This is Christianity.'"

Mr. Gurley, who was Secretary of the Colonization Society at the time Miss Mercer sent her emancipated servants to Liberia, has furnished copies of two letters written to him by her respecting them. Would that they could be published in their integrity! This would involve an unwarrantable exposure of subjects of a nature too personal for the public eye; but two short extracts may be given as illustrative of the spirit by which she was actuated:

"I hope for the blessing of God on our united efforts to do good, and I trust much to the efficacy of prayers offered by the faithful for the success of our endeavours."

This emancipation of her slaves was one of a chain of acts inseparably linked together, by which she reduced herself from *affluence* to absolute dependence on her own exertions for maintenance, and that not ignorantly and gradually, but instantly and with full knowledge of the inevitable result. She therefore apologizes to Mr. Gurley for doing so little for them, and remarks: "Should any think I

have not done my part by these poor creatures, I can but bear the blame *silently*. A formal remonstrance against my making such a disposition of my property has been addressed to me by ——— and ———. Had it been any thing but human flesh and blood, souls belonging to the God that made them, I should have yielded. But I have determined to abide the consequences." These consequences were anxiety, toil, and poverty, endured without a murmur or regret, during twenty-five years of life enfeebled by constant disease. These sacrifices for Africa, and her efforts in behalf of the negro race, were alone sufficient to place her name high on the roll of female philanthropists. Allusion has already been made to the peculiar beauty of the products of her pencil and needle. These were ever ready in the service of the cause; and when the care of young ladies placed her in a position of influence over them, she incited and encouraged them to emulate her efforts. Soon after the opening of her school, she established a society among her pupils for the purpose of promoting education among the colonists, membership in which was to be constituted by the contribution of work of not less value than ten dollars per annum, which was to be disposed of at annual fairs to be held at the school. The proceeds of these sales, which were continued for several years, constituted a fund respecting the employment of which she had much anxiety, and

consulted with several eminent advocates of colonization. At one time she procured, through a friend in Baltimore, a correspondence with a gentleman of well-known benevolence, John Ross, Esq., of Glasgow, Scotland, with a view of ascertaining what advantages would accrue from sending some intelligent coloured boys to that country to be educated, with a design of sending them afterwards to Liberia as teachers or physicians. Mr. Ross entered into the scheme with much energy, and secured the co-operation of a gentleman who was well qualified, and willing to receive the beneficiaries into his family, and superintend their education. Miss Mercer accordingly addressed a circular to each of the young ladies who had participated in the benefit of her instructions from the first opening of her school, informing them that the sum necessary to the accomplishment of this purpose was not less than eight or nine hundred dollars per annum, and then proceeds:

"To raise the sum specified among you, would require only such an individual contribution as the smallest child might annually obtain by her needle.

"Remembering, therefore, how assiduously and affectionately I have laboured among you all to instil a deep sense of your responsibility to the common Parent of us all, for the faithful performance of the duty enjoined upon us to give the gospel to the heathen, and to do good to all men as we have the

opportunity, I do beseech that you will not refuse to unite with me in this good work and labour of love. In doing so you will most acceptably evince your attachment to, and impart the highest gratification you can confer upon your truly and tenderly attached friend and preceptress,

"MARGARET MERCER."

The plan of sending lads to Scotland for education was abandoned, but not her interest in the object. Indeed, she might well be adduced as an illustrious example of that perseverance in well doing, which has ever been recognised, as well by the heathen moralist as the inspired apostle, as an essential ingredient in the character of virtue. Having examined carefully her ground, and entered on it from motives of principle, she adhered to it to the end. Even the fraud of those in whom she confided, and who professed to aim at the same object, did not deter her, nor abate her determined zeal in the cause. She watched over the growth of the fund which accrued from the sales with great care, but found no mode for employing it to advantage, until she observed a notice in a New York paper of the organization of a Young Men's Colonization Society in that city; that it had resolved to establish a high school in Liberia, and that the proposal had met with much favour; no less than fifteen thousand dollars having been promptly subscribed for this pur-

pose. She at once put herself in correspondence with the accredited agent of this body, rejoicing in the prospect of the accomplishment of a hope so dear and so long entertained. She soon after had a letter from the same person, dated at Washington, informing her that he was at that place on business connected with the enterprise; that a vessel was chartered and about to sail having on board the frame of the building for a college; that all things were in favourable progress, and asking for the transfer of the money in her hands. Unhappily this request was complied with. The agent proved treacherous, and the long-hoarded and anxiously-watched fund was squandered by a worthless impostor. Few circumstances in life caused her more grief and indignation. She resorted to every means in her power to recover the money, and always expressed her conviction that as she had confided not in the individual, but in the authorized agent of a responsible society, that society was accountable for the debt, and writing to a friend whom she employed still to prosecute this purpose for her, after the lapse of some years, she says: In an unhappy hour I signed away to the agent of the young gentlemen of New York the produce of years of self-denial, and industry, and active charity, and from that day to this I have never been able to learn that even a single individual of this society regarded this act of fraud committed in their name, and by their autho-

rized agent, upon a society of benevolent ladies, as worthy of the *slightest notice.* Not so, however, with me; I feel bound in conscience to repair the effects of my imprudence in the trust reposed on me, and the very moment in which I obtain the means of doing so, I shall refund the whole sum from the profits of my labour." Such was her high sense of moral responsibility.

Her views on the subject of slavery, and the best means for the promotion of its abolition, may be gathered from the following extracts from her correspondence with Gerrit Smith, Esq., of Peterborough, New York. Some years after the emancipation of her servants, she received from Mr. Smith the present of a book, which became the occasion of their intercourse. Mr. Smith was at that time a warm advocate and liberal supporter of the colonization cause, though he subsequently changed his views entirely.

"One of the greatest encouragements to hope that Christians meet with in this world, is the full measure, heaping over, which men pay into their bosom, for the least act of love to God or to their fellow-creatures. Often I ask myself what mighty thing hast thou done that praise and honour have followed thee? And truly I can find nothing to entitle me to such a gratification, as I felt a few days since in receiving a little book with a few lines traced in pencil, by the hand of one whose name I have long held in high and grateful association. It is not, dear

sir, in my nature to soil with adulation the purity of that which I love. May the 'God who loveth a cheerful giver' be himself your great and sure reward. For myself, I disclaim the merit of being disinterested in my efforts for the colonization cause. Although under other circumstances I *hope* I might have done as you have. Yet the enemy who said, 'Doth Job serve God for naught?' may surely say the same of me. My personal advantages in promoting the removal of slaves from our unhappy country is too immediate not to detract most evidently from my motives. Perhaps this is my *reward;* for considering as I do the Colonization Society as the only possible means of reconciling the South to the subject of emancipation, and knowing by experience how much the subject is growing in the affections of at least Maryland and Virginia, I should perhaps be too highly exalted by the honour of being named among the promoters of the most blessed of Christian institutions, could I for one moment lose sight of the self-interest which suggests continually the great weight of responsibility which rests upon the conscience of the slave-holder, and the awful retribution which we suffer in the corruption of children brought up among slaves. Indeed, my dear sir, I consider the evil of slavery as falling quite as much upon slave-holders as the slaves, and I really wish some of the incendiary abolitionists of the North were invested with all the rights, privi-

leges, and duties of a large landed estate for twelve months. If at the expiration of the term they did not confess their Southern neighbours were much more forgiving and patient with slaves than they themselves could be, the experiment would be different from any similar one which I have seen tried."

The correspondence thus commenced was kept up during several years, and the letters which passed between them are marked by kindly expressions of common interest in a cause esteemed of the highest importance by both, and give evidence of mutual esteem and respect.

Mr. Smith, in acknowledging the receipt of that from which we have just made an extract, says: "The Colonization Society is by its constitution debarred from making direct attacks on slavery, and that such attacks should be made on a system, so full of evil, I have no doubt. But these attacks should be made in a spirit of intelligence and kindness, and Christian forbearance. The Anti-slavery Society will be doing a great amount of unmixed good, when it shall confine itself to the work of addressing temperate and judicious publications to the consciences of all men on the subject of slavery. But the tendency of many of their publications is unhappily to irritate the slave-holder, and to render him more and more inaccessible to good influence. My great hope that our Society, (the American

Colonization Society,) will contribute largely to loosen the bands of slavery in this country, is founded on its work in Africa. The reflex influence of great improvement in Africa, on her outcast children here, will be mighty. Give her a place among the nations of the earth, class her with Great Britain and France, and it will be as morally impossible for us to hold her children in bondage, as it is now to reduce to involuntary servitude a Briton or a Frenchman." Mr. Smith took a warm interest in Miss Mercer's project for the education of young men to be employed as teachers in Africa, and this afforded the theme for several letters in which Miss Mercer's views on slavery were distinctly stated in strong terms. But though they agreed fully in its condemnation, they diverged more and more on the mode by which the evil was to be remedied. Miss Mercer cleaving to the Colonization Society as "God's own work," and believing it to "afford the only means of reconciling the South to emancipation," whilst Mr. Smith gradually withdrew from the advocacy of it, and even assumed a position of open hostility. The one dwelt in the midst of slavery, and saw and felt for the painful position in which many who were involved in it were placed, yet was never beguiled by her interest in the master to forego her anxiety for the good of the slave. Whilst the other, living aloof, and looking at it through media which distorted the object at which

he was gazing, thinking only of the one party, overlooked what was due to the other. Miss Mercer felt truly the difficulty of the position of the conscientious master, and knew well that there were such. Mr. Smith looked only at the wickedness perpetrated under the influence of the system, and forgot that there were many reluctantly involved in it, and others, who while they were not fully awakened to the evil of it, were yet as much shocked as himself at atrocities which he ascribed to the system, and for which all were held responsible who did not enter into the violent and impracticable measures which were proposed by Northern abolitionists.

In one of her letters she thus expresses herself: "I do not know why we should be provoked at the virulent abuse of such men as Garrison; but it is not in human nature to hear your good, evil spoken of, and not be indignant, and though I am convinced the violence of the attacks has been of great service to our cause in this country, yet it is very painful to think that such a man as Wilberforce should have been so cruelly prejudiced against us. I must agree with —— as far as I know any thing of anti-slavery proceedings, being obliged to judge of the tree by its fruits. I have seen no effect produced on any one individual slave-holder by their intemperate and arrogant publications, but exasperation against those faults of slaves, which all who have any acquaint-

ance with the subject know to exist. I am afraid to talk much upon this subject, for I fear I also may express myself too warmly, thinking that for me there would be an apology in the dangers produced by these incendiaries. For while the well-disposed and faithful servants of kind masters will suffer and die with the whites in a general insurrection, the lawless and vicious will have in their power to massacre men, women, and children, in their sleep. This is my apology for feeling and expressing the deepest indignation against the man who dares to throw the fire-brand into the powder magazine, while all are asleep, and stands himself at a *distance* to see the mangled victims of his barbarous fury. I pray you, dear sir, in the strength of your benevolence, to conceive the state of families living remote from assistance in the country. Suppose, as I have often witnessed, an alarm of insurrection; think of the mother of a family startled from her sleep by some unusual noise, and seized with the horrid apprehension of the scene which may await her in a few minutes.—But we will leave this exciting topic. I had intended to send you just a single sheet, and have, under the powerful vibration of this string, been moved to transgress, not I hope Christian patience, but prudence. The great foundation of all my belief is that *God* by a transmuting power turns all evil into good; trusting in this, I wait upon Him. But, really, the incivility of these fanatics is worthy

of remark." She then comments with strong feelings of disgust upon a pamphlet which had been sent to her by mail, and proceeds: "Do not for a moment doubt that slavery is in *my mind a direct violation of Christianity*, but if it is according to the holiness of God to bear long with the wicked and idolatrous world, why should we attempt to effect the good work in an hour, any more than the conversion of the heathen nations? I will never, so help me Heaven, turn away from the promotion of *the first wish of my soul, the abolition of slavery in the United States*, any more than I will turn away from the duty of persuading all men to be reconciled to God. But I will temper my zeal with as much discretion as my nature possesses. Excuse me, my much-respected friend, if I have expressed myself with unbecoming warmth. You say you know me well; alas, it is well for me you do not know how very full of sin are my very best services." It was some three years after this that Miss Mercer received through the post-office, directed to herself, a pamphlet of which Mr. Smith was the author, and she supposed sent to her by himself, on the subject of slavery, in which he enumerated some of the most atrocious acts of wickedness which could be raked from the annals of Southern crime, and employed them in his argument, as though there were no Southern slave-holders who viewed them with the same detestation as himself; and as though similar

crimes were not perpetrated by persons equally destitute of principle in states where slavery is unknown; overlooking the truth, which would appear so plain that it must present itself to every thoughtful mind, that these crimes had their origin not in slavery, but in human iniquity, and that slavery merely gave them the peculiar colour which resulted from the circumstances in which they were committed. Miss Mercer felt strongly indignant at this indiscriminate condemnation, and especially grieved at what she construed into a personal application of it to herself in the transmission to her of the pamphlet. She mourned too, with heartfelt grief, over the sad results which she foresaw must follow such a course, in exciting the evil passions of the master, and thus rendering more galling and hopeless the bondage of the slave. She therefore wrote to Mr. S. in strong terms of condemnation, and adds:

"This very morning I have prayed that your dogmatical, opinionated, persecuting spirit might be changed for one more calculated to do good. We have exchanged expressions of friendship and sympathy which I shall never forget, and in remembrance I must beg you to forbear extending to me in their circulation things which to my mind are equally wrong and injurious. May God bless you, dear sir, and direct you into a way more calculated to effect His will upon earth, which is always peace and good will among men. Sincerely and respectfully, your friend."

A reply, equally temperate and respectful, was returned by Mr. Smith, who says: "I do not greatly wonder at the spirit of the letter I received from you. Indeed, it is not a little creditable to you, that, considering the circumstances, it is tempered with so much moderation and kindness. I gather from your language, that it is a copy of my letter to Dr. Smylie that you have been reading. I do not know whence you received it. In it I have endeavoured to show that American slavery is sin. It is not surprising that such an attempt should be offensive to one who resides in a slave State, and whose dearest friends are probably, most of them, slave-holders. I am happy that your temper has been no more ruffled by this attempt. I never had cause to respect you more highly and to love you more sincerely than I now have. That, under circumstances so calculated to lead you to dislike me, your letter should still manifest your respect and kindness and Christian love for me, is what I expect from Margaret Mercer, but not from a large portion of those who are unhappily connected either personally or through their families, with slavery. I hope, if ever you come to the North, you will visit Gerrit Smith, and allow him the gratification of a kind and frank conversation with you on the subject of American slavery. If my letter is unhappily characterized, as you think it is, by a dogmatical, opinionated, persecuting spirit, I feel very confident

you will find this spirit does not prevail, and is not habitual in me.

"I thank you that you remember me in your prayers. I need your remembrance before the mercy seat, for I am a guilty sinner. Especially pray for me that I may have a hundred fold more sympathy for the Saviour's enslaved poor, and for those who oppress them. One of the great sins of my life is the smallness of the compassion I have felt for the slave and the slave-holder. And now, my dear friend, allow me, in all kindness and love, to beg you to pray to God to enlighten your own mind in respect to the nature of American slavery. Do ask Him to teach you whether a system which turns man—immortal, godlike man—into a thing, a marketable commodity—which forbids him the reading of the Bible, and the sacred rights of the marriage institution, is sinful or not. If He teach you that it is sinful, then you and I are agreed. Be assured that so soon as you are convinced that the system of American slavery is contrary to God's word, no important differences between us on the subject of slavery will remain. You will then read my work and say amen to every page of it. Rely on it, here is the source, the starting-point of our differences on this subject. You have vague and unsettled notions of the moral character of American slavery—now half-condemning it—now excusing it. I, on the contrary, am thoroughly convinced that

slavery is sin—nay, more, is heinous wickedness—nay, more, is the most wicked system that the avarice, and lust, and tyranny of the human heart ever devised. With admiration and love for one who has given so many proofs of possessing a noble philanthropy, and with a strong hope that she will yet plead the cause of the slave, because he is wickedly, most wickedly, wronged, trodden down, and despised, I remain your friend."

To this letter, impressed, doubtless, with the evidences of Christian meekness, and exonerating himself from the charge of having given occasion to her personal feeling by sending the pamphlet to her, Miss Mercer thus responds:

Dear Sir,—

After having, as a vindication of the modesty of my character, assured you that your pamphlet came to my address here as if sent by you from New York, I would, as wisely guided by Him who was *silent*, and opened not his mouth, refrain from replying, when a reply would be only a vain repetition. There is only over-evidence of that *excessive* zeal of which abolitionists are accused in your letter, which duty to myself requires me to answer. You speak of my not being opposed to slavery, or thinking it no sin. Sir, from the bottom of my heart, I believe at this moment I am *more* opposed to slavery *than you are!!!* I believe that I would

do more, if personal sacrifice would avail, to put an end to African slavery. *But neither you nor I are God*, that we should be able to root out the tares and leave the wheat growing; and I am, and always shall be of the opinion that you want that humility which trusts to the mild, prevailing effect of Christian doctrine to work a *gradual* change, and because the work does not go on to please you, Jehu-like, you would seize the reins, and drive the chariot of the sun out of heaven. If slavery is sin, it is not *the* sin you make it. You might as justly and wisely call it burglary, or bigamy, or any thing else; and such injudicious epithets of contemptuous obloquy injure the cause in which they are used. A parent dies and leaves an infant his slaves. The *law* takes possession of the heir and the inheritance, and the child is supported and educated from the hire of those slaves, and finally the law, when he comes of age, formally invests him with possession of his inheritance, and you call *him* a *thief*. Why, what strange definitions must be contained in your dictionary! Or, take a stronger case, and by far the most common case in our unhappy country. A son is left the inheritance of slaves and debts, and the law compels him to *pay* the *debts*, before he *can* liberate the slaves. He may *sell* them, it is true, and enrich himself; but he is perhaps as humane as Gerrit Smith, and he *loves*—ay he loves his servants, and he struggles through a life of hard-

ships to prevent their being sold: nevertheless, *he* is branded as a *thief*. This last case, sir, was that of a near neighbour and friend of mine. Dear sir, you are strengthening the hands of oppression,—you are filling a nation with rancour and deadly enmities,—you are pouring out phials of wrath upon the miserable objects of your care,—and you will be answerable to God for all that you might have done by a different course, since a course of violent contention is neither justified by the word, nor the example of our Master. I am, and have been since my childhood, *entirely*, and at *all* times opposed to slavery. But I am *more* so to your mode of getting rid of the evil. Rather might the tares grow till the day of judgment than I unite to extirpate them with ungodly violence. You are still Gerrit Smith, and I feel that while Liberia is dear to me as the apple of mine eye, I must ever feel that I am your grieved, your offended, but your affectionate friend,

M. Mercer.

"Consider every expression contained in my last as still the expression of my heart. May the Prince of Peace reign supreme in your soul; and may He show you whenever you wound Him, by departing from his meek and lowly spirit. May He love you and keep you close to Himself, and may He let no pharisaical confidence in your own righteousness be your temptation. When men *know* that they do

more than others, they are often most in danger. Do not think I do not pray thus for *myself*—nay, if I were not in Christ, I should certainly not have written this letter, for when I act from *impulse*, I always sin. Farewell until all differences are settled in Christ's judgment of truth."

It must be borne in mind that this letter, of which Mr. Smith himself testifies, "it was the warm expression of an honest heart," was not intended for any other eye than that of him to whom it was addressed. Her actions had proved that she had reason to speak strongly of her hatred of slavery, as equal to that of Mr. S. If, then, upon such enemies of slavery as Miss Mercer, the letter to Dr. Smylie produced an effect so foreign to the avowed object of the abolitionists, what but still stronger hostility to their measures could result from the yet more exceptionable works which have since issued from the North? How much greater must be the irritation of those not yet convinced, as she was, of the sinfulness of slavery! Strange that such results should not have curbed the rampart enthusiasm of their erring course.

During ten years she continued with eminent success to conduct her school amid the scenes of her childhood, and in the halls sanctified to her by the long residence of parents most fondly loved in their lives, whose memory was cherished with the greatest veneration, and whose mortal remains rested

within the grounds. But in addition to the circumstances which endear scenes the least attractive in themselves, and clothe with the charms of association the least picturesque landscape, Cedar Park was possessed of beauties both of nature and of art, which made it essentially appropriate to the purposes to which it was thus devoted. The outspread waters of the river rolled before the door, flowing into the Chesapeake, whose broad bosom lay stretched out toward the horizon, bearing upon it the constantly passing commerce of the third city in the Union, while immediately around the mansion was a park of several hundred acres, clothed in the richest verdure, kept ever cropped by a numerous herd of fallow deer, scattered over its undulated surface diversified with forest trees. It was a scene in which the mind could not but expand, and the heart find improvement from the objects by which it was surrounded. But in the year 1834 the growth of her brother's family, who resided with her, and her desire to promote their comfort, induced Miss Mercer to change her residence. The only alternative was to dismiss her train of teachers, limit exceedingly the number of her pupils, and thus diminish the extent of her usefulness, and abandon the pursuit to which she had consecrated her life, and devoted her energies. For a short time she removed to Franklin, in the vicinity of Baltimore, under the impression that in the neighbour-

hood of that city she should secure more competent assistance in some branches of education, and therefore obtain a still larger amount of patronage. In these expectations she was disappointed, and she found that whilst her expenses were much increased, there was not a corresponding increase in the number of her pupils, and she shortly transferred her establishment to Belmont, near Leesburg, in Virginia, where she purchased a dilapidated mansion, in a secluded position, and had it fitted up with every convenience for her purpose.

The neighbourhood was one which possessed no attractions. Far removed from any persons of cultivated mind or congenial feelings, nearly six miles from any place of public worship, her only near neighbours persons of limited intelligence, and destitute of any sympathy with her views and efforts for their benefit, no situation could have presented fewer points of attraction. It was the autumn when she entered upon its occupation, with a very limited number of pupils, and under circumstances calculated to damp the ardour of the most energetic. One of the assistants, in referring to it afterward, remarked, "That was a sad, dark winter indeed."

But it was the rising of the sun dispelling the mist, and exhibiting the dark rough points of the uncultivated valley, only to cause the seed which lay dormant to germinate, and the solitary place to be glad, and the wilderness to blossom as the rose.

Miss Mercer could not confine her attention to her pupils alone, and sit down inactive, surrounded by moral and intellectual evil, without making an effort for its removal; and though at the first those efforts were misunderstood, and her purposes thwarted, in the end, she was enabled to triumph in the accomplishment of her designs. It was a favourite theory with her that nothing can withstand the influence of love. Thus she writes:

"I am persuaded that none can be saved but those who *love* God; and there are so few who do not love every thing and any thing better than God, that I must suppose the great object of religious instruction is to teach them to *love* God. They think they do love Him, but where among the teachers, the preachers, the professors of our faith, do we find a love of God prevailing over a love of the world? Where do we find a child of God acquiescing joyfully in the will of his Father, be that will what it may, because it is his will? Where do we find a woman loving her God as many a woman loves her husband, having no pleasure in any thing which interferes with his pleasure? Now such is the constitution of human nature, that we can never feel this love for God until we are deeply impressed with a belief in his love for us—his all-prevailing love. * * * * I believe that the most desperate villain that exists would be more impressed by a visit from an angel of light, than a fiend from hell. I

believe that none can come except they be drawn of the Father, and that this attraction is in a contemplation of his goodness, his wisdom, and his power." Applying this principle to her own practice, she strove to draw those under her influence to a love for herself, that so she might win them to the love of God. She ministered to their wants, and comforted them in their distresses, and when they repaid her efforts for their benefit with insult and reproach, she still poured the fire of love upon their heads, until the hardness of the natural heart was subdued, and they were brought not only to acknowledge her good designs towards them, but still further to "glorify her Father in heaven." With this view she paid most liberally for the produce of the labour of her new neighbours, for which her large establishment created a market. She procured an instructress, and established a school for their children who were growing up in ignorance and vice. She instructed them in agriculture and domestic economy, and induced the young ladies under her care to distribute their children among them as wards, over whom they were to watch, and train them in habits of neatness and virtue; and destitute as they were of all religious instruction, she threw open to them the halls of her own house at the period of worship there, until by an effort, which cannot be appreciated except by those who witnessed it and knew the circumstances in which

it was made, she was enabled to accomplish the desire of her soul, and saw a church consecrated especially to the worship of "the great God our Saviour," and regularly supplied with the ministrations of the gospel.

One who partook of the same spirit by which she was actuated, and entered heartily into her plans, speaking of these events, writes:

"The good our dear Miss Mercer effected in this neighbourhood should form a prominent part in a sketch of her life. On her first coming here, she found the people destitute of nearly every spiritual and temporal comfort; but by her own personal and persevering exertions amongst them, a most pleasing and striking change is now apparent. It was many years before her most energetic efforts for the erection of the little Belmont church were blessed with success, but during the whole of her residence here, her house was open to the neighbourhood on the Sabbath, and all were invited freely to attend the family services. At first these people were so ignorant of even the external duties of religion as frequently to interrupt our worship by their rude and disorderly conduct; now, our pastor and other clergymen who occasionally visit us, say they never preached to a more attentive and orderly congregation. This change is of course to be entirely attributed to our dear Miss Mercer's persevering efforts for their improvement. By her liberal re-

muneration of their services, and personal attention to their domestic comfort, the temporal condition of the neighbourhood has been greatly improved, and many comfortable little tenements erected since the encouragement afforded by her to honest industry. The ingratitude or unworthy conduct of those she wished to befriend never checked her benevolent efforts for their good; on the contrary, she never failed to rebuke those who urged her on this account to give up her interest in them, saying the question was not whether they were worthy, but whether they were suffering."

The amount of hostility she was compelled to encounter, thus referred to by Miss C., was at one time very great, amounting to a determination to drive her from the neighbourhood. Unjust claims against her were purchased and put in suit, thus recompensing her good with evil. Yet was she "patient, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as she knew that her labour was not in vain in the Lord."

Depressed as were her spirits by the circumstances in which she was placed, and dark as were the prospects of her own school for a time, her heart was at once interested for the spiritual destitution of those among whom her lot was thus cast, and she immediately set herself to devising methods for their improvement. The erection of a place of worship was one of her warmest wishes, and after

years of patient, untiring, self-denying labour, she lived to see it accomplished, and it now stands in itself an object of attraction to all that pass by, but of far greater interest as the witness to those who reside near, of her anxiety for the welfare of their souls. Nor should it fail to produce a still wider influence. Certainly no circumstances could be conceived more disheartening than those in which it was planned, undertaken, and accomplished. With no pecuniary resources other than the results of her own toil, labouring without capital for the support of a large and necessarily expensive establishment, conscious that there were many calls for her aid to those whom she loved more than her own self; oppressed with debt incurred from the highest and holiest motives, daily engaged in the discharge of duties, which if she had sought merely to pacify her conscience, might have relieved the most anxious, she yet shrunk not from an undertaking which is considered too great for many of exhaustless means, who rest content to be debarred the privileges of public worship and teaching themselves, though they might be acquired without self-denial, and utterly regardless of the claims of perishing souls around them. The circumstances under which this work was accomplished would scarcely be credited, could they be described. The following letter written at the time will convey a forcible illustration of them. It was written in all

the fulness and freeness of a long-continued and most intimate friendship to one of congenial feelings and closely allied to her.

"Your letter by last mail rebuked my conscience so severely, my dear ——, that I resolved that at all events I would write by this mail. I confess that I have been so much kept in suspense by the state of my affairs that I have not had spirits to write, thinking that my letter would afford any thing but pleasure to my friends; but when I think of what my troubles are, and what those of my friends, I cannot justify to myself the neglect of those sources of mutual comfort which are always open to relations. I have a constant desire to hear from you all on my mind, and I ought to remember that you have the same feeling about me; but such is the weakness of human nature, that we indulge morbid engrossing feelings about external things, and neglect the pure spiritual comforts which are ever open to us. I preserve a cheerfulness which seems partly mechanical, but it is, I trust, very much induced by a firm belief that God rules, and that every thing must work for good under His superintending providence. It has been a great aggravation of my many perplexities, that I see no chance of my ever again having the means of visiting friends and scenes so very dear to me as Elmwood and its inmates. For the last few years the means have been rapidly diminishing, while the necessity for endeavouring

to keep up the school has never diminished in the least.

"Now I am bound to a wrecked vessel on a desert coast, I am obliged to meet all the expenses of a school here, and have no income to support it. Ten scholars affording employment for seven teachers! what can be done? I screw and economize to the greatest extent; I save every thing, and buy nothing, and yet I am rapidly going down, and for weeks have actually had just *two cents*, neither more nor less, to meet the expenses of this great establishment." She then refers to subjects of a nature too private for any eye but those for which they were intended by the writer, and adds: "But no, I am going too far, circumstances are not as bad as possible, though I should be like a bird escaped from the fowler's snare, if I were liberated without one dollar and without debt, . . . . had I any thing agreeable to communicate, I should make letters fly north, south, east, and west, and it would not be many hours before . . . . . would have a budget; meanwhile may the Comforter abide with you all, and enable us one and all to set our hearts and affections upon heavenly things. Ever unalterably, yours, "M. MERCER."

It was but rarely she indulged thus in the expression of her cares and sorrows even to her most intimate friends and nearest connexions, and she was

wont to declare she "could not send missiles of affection barbed with poison."

The allusion to the small number of her pupils at this time affords an appropriate occasion to record another evidence of the disinterested motives by which she was influenced. Thus, while she refers to her school as consisting of ten pupils, it is in connexion with the means of support derived from them. There were at the same time no fewer than five other young ladies receiving their whole support, and partaking of all the benefits of her school, without rendering her any remuneration whatever; and the same disinterested benevolence was manifested during every period of her career as a teacher.

Yet even under such circumstances of trial her faith did not fail her, having an anchor sure and steadfast fixed within the veil. Instead of murmuring and repining at the disappointment of her hopes, or fainting under the difficulties of the way, we find her thus addressing one of her former assistants, to whom she was strongly attached, and in whose welfare she took the deepest interest.

..... "Indeed, my beloved friend, my sister, *I would not*, if I could, give you an adequate description of the vexations, cares, and perplexities attending my removal to this place; and were it not that I am in the hands of the Lord, and feel that tribulation worketh patience, and did I not remember that my blessed Master was perfected through

suffering, I should have been driven to desperation long ago. Even now I know not what means the Lord will provide to relieve me from my deep distress; but it has been at all times His pleasure and wisdom to bring relief for my necessities in a way that I knew not, and I doubt not it will be so now. ——— tells me you are still unsettled in your plans: surely in these times of scarcity and high prices you will not attempt housekeeping. My dear friend, unless you can do better, come back to your home, for *while I have a house, that house* is your home. . . . . Come help me to labour in this most uncultivated corner of the Lord's vineyard. I never saw such people. The Sabbath profaned, and no church in the neighbourhood."

To her long-loved friend, Miss ——, she writes: "This instant, my dear, my early and kind friend, I received your valued letter, and hasten to relieve you of anxiety as to my health. I have been this winter much indisposed, and, as you may suppose, not in very good spirits away from home and early friends. And yet God, who is always good, has surrounded me with many blessings, and I have, as the spring approached, revived wonderfully. I am now in my usual health, and as busy as a bee, building up the waste places, replanting the gardens, enclosing the grounds, tilling the fields, providing for my immense family in the wilderness, teaching natural history, botany, chemistry, drawing, rheto-

ric, &c., &c., and superintending every thing. You may believe that I have very little time, but how warmly do I greet a letter from you, and how rejoiced shall I be to write to you, whenever I hear from you that you are well enough to take pleasure in my letters. I am working out my salvation with fear and trembling, my dear friend, for I have much to apprehend from my becoming too much absorbed in worldly associations. Many a snare is hid under a duty of high obligation; and yet I trust that you from your gloomy *seclusion*, and I from my distracting *publicity* of life, will meet *safe* in our heavenly Father's mansion of *rest*, whence we shall be enabled to cast a glance of grateful retrospection upon the dark and thorny path by which we came into eternal life. "Blessed be God, who always giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." This winter has been very mild here, and has given me a more favourable impression of the climate than I before entertained. The population is but a grade above the children of the mist, but we are making an effort to instruct them by getting a church established. They seem quite willing to build a small house to serve as a church and school-house, and I augur well from their good disposition on this subject."

To her friend, J. H. B. Latrobe, Esq., of Baltimore, she thus writes, after some years had elapsed, on the same subject.

"As you have never accomplished your promised visit to Belmont, you have no idea of the vineyard of our church having such a wilderness in it; and in turning to you to ask a favour, I only wish I could describe to you the moral and religious destitution against which a little band of poor women have been engaged here for now seven years. We have settled where has never been within six miles in any direction a place of public worship of any denomination, and where, of course, a population needing most emphatically our aid is most perfectly unconscious of their wants. Once since I came here I had collected a little fund to build a church; but the very people who were to have benefited by our efforts joined to rob us of our little fund, and now again we have made enough to commence; and I have bethought me that you would contribute a *simple* but *tasteful* plan, the very *cheapest* that can be constructed. Will you not do us that kindness? The site is a slight elevation in a skirt of wood near the road." Thus it will be seen that no obstacle ever interposed an insuperable difficulty to her in the path to which duty led her. Principle was the incentive to action, and feeling was introduced merely as an adjunct; and while the one communicated ardour to her efforts, the other guided those efforts with steadiness to the attainment of the goal proposed. Who can enter with full sympathy into her feelings, when, after seven years of almost

hopeless effort, the soft notes of the swelling organ, combined with the richer melody of the voices of those who had recognised in her the instrument in God's hand of new life to their souls, first floated along that "skirt of wood,"

> "A holy, heavenly melody,
> The incense of converted hearts."

But whilst *we* thus render honour to whom honour is due, *her* crown was cast at the feet of Him who "first loved her," to whom belong "all glory and honour," as from Him comes "all power."

While she thus anxiously endeavoured to promote the spiritual good of her own immediate neighbourhood, her enlarged benevolence extended its compassion to those still more destitute; and with the deep interest we have seen she took in Africa, it will afford no matter of surprise to find her longing for the extension of the blessings of the gospel and civilization to its degraded inhabitants.

Among the ladies who at different times were introduced as assistants into the school of Miss Mercer, were several of great loveliness of character, to whom she became closely and tenderly attached, and with whom she maintained a frequent intercourse after they withdrew from her institution. She ever regarded their interests as identified with her own,* and followed their course with sympathy

* On one occasion, having visited a flourishing school under the supervision of an old scholar, she said, with her usual sweetness, "I consider this school as a little colony from my own."

and counsel. Among them was one who, after having been separated from her for nearly three years, formed a matrimonial alliance with the Rev. L. B. Minor, of the Protestant Episcopal church, and accompanied him on a mission to Cape Palmas in Western Africa. Miss Mercer's attachment to Miss Stewart had been very strong, and her interest in the proposed enterprise was great: uniting, as it did, her personal feeling of attachment to the individual, with her high appreciation of the duty incumbent on the Church to spread to those yet in darkness the light of the knowledge of the gospel. No sooner was she apprized of the views of Miss Stewart, than she wrote to her:—

My own beloved sister in Christ:—

All I will say is that you should commune with God in your own heart by prayer, and by a serious consideration of the duty which you are now invited to perform. Is not He who made you able to protect you? does He not know whereof you are made, and does He not consequently know how to preserve you under all circumstances? *He* says, "Go ye unto all the world." Has He not been long preparing you by the teaching of his Holy Spirit? and if you yield to the dissuasions of men, will you be happy in the consciousness of having done so? I do not wish to persuade you, my dearest friend, to undertake the great and solemn mission—but I

feel it to be a Christian duty to recall to your mind certain considerations. As for your friends, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Suppose Mr. Minor had acted on the principles which are urged upon you, would it have been for the good or glory of the Church? And yet his dear old blind mother is a more sacred and interesting tie than any which binds you to home. I should love to have you always with me, but my imagination is already with you in your mountain school, where I see you, seated in the midst of your pupils, singing sweet hymns of praise, and teaching them to lisp the words of prayer. Our heavenly Father will surely go with you, and Christ will never leave you. Submission under trials is as important a part of Christian walk and duty as your rejoicing in the prosperity of the spiritual city you may assist to found in the very dominion of Satan. I have written in great haste: if it were possible, I would come instantly to you, but my heavy charge and the season both forbid, and I hardly dare hope that you may be able to spare two or three days, and fly up to Belmont, that I may see you. Say every thing affectionate to Mr. Minor. You did not know that he is a kind of cousin of mine. I should like to go to Africa with you if I were young. But I will stay at home, and pray that God may order all things temporal and spiritual for your happiness. May you have *faith*, and pray *believing*—asking

for none other things but such as the Spirit directs, and may you return at no distant time, to bring glad tidings of great joy to all that love the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen and Amen.

Yours unalterably,

M. Mercer.

A few days later she adds:—"I wrote you by return of the mail by which I received yours, from the impression made by it on my mind. All that I can now say in the moment allowed me is, that if I understand your situation and feelings, I believe it is essential to your future happiness, that you should prove your trust in God, and go where He calls you to go for His sake and the gospel's. Struggles of feeling you must expect to have in quitting home and country and friends. I would not persuade you to go, for it is in vain for you to do so if you do not go from the impulse of your own heart, urged on by faith and love.

That God may bless you, and have you in His holy keeping, prays

Your devotedly attached friend,

M. Mercer.

Three years of missionary toil returned Mrs. Minor to her native country, a desolate, mourning widow. Among the first and warmest to express their sympathy, and welcome her to scenes of rest, was Miss Mercer, who thus addressed her.

"When you arrived in this country, my own beloved friend, I hastened down to Baltimore to meet you, but found you were not there, and imperious duties at home forced me back, hoping that no long time would elapse before I should have another opportunity to see you; that perhaps you would come to me, or that, at all events, I should be able to correspond with you. Since then, I have never known where you were, or how to write to you. I have longed, dearest, most precious friend, to listen to the outpourings of your cares and griefs, and to learn what were your future plans. I know you so well, that I am assured you cannot be happy in inaction, and yet there is much necessity for prudent and judicious decision with regard to the choice of *means* in the service of God. I should therefore be most happy if you would write to me, if you cannot come here to see me. I would gladly come to you if I could leave my school, but that is now impossible. I think that your wounded spirit would be greatly restored by the spiritual rest of Belmont. It has pleased our God, just at this time, to visit my little garden, with the refreshing showers of His grace, and a sweeter scene could scarcely be found than in the band of dear young persons, all seeking the Lord in their youth. They are just now in the fulness and fervour of a first love, and anxious to be *doing good*. Now if you would come among them, you might do much good for your cause. Come, then, my beloved Mary, and let us once more unite our

voices in prayer and praise. How often have I thought, with longing desire, since you left home, of your sweet hymns. I never hear 'Rise, my soul,' but it brings you immediately before my view. I cannot say more unless I hear from you, but I can and do pray that wherever you may be, and in whatever portion of the vineyard the Lord has called you into, He may give you sensible peace in the perception that passive duties are as much blessed as those which, humanly speaking, we call more active."

And again, she writes to her: "I do not wonder, my beloved friend, that you have been shattered by the trying duties you have had to perform, but the climate of your native land, the soothing society of your friends and family, and the bland and gentle influence of the Comforter, Him who loved you and loves you, and will love you with an everlasting love, are yours. There is, blessed be God, a *rest* even here for the people of God, and often I think of the words of the Saviour, 'While the Bridegroom tarried, they *all* slumbered and slept.' The wise and the foolish have equal need of that relaxation and repose of the animal spirits which give exhausted nature time to recover its elasticity after sore trials. . . . . I am grieved to find the church so much distracted by dissensions. Mr. Barnes and the Episcopal Recorder appear to me to be both committing sin against their common Redeemer.*

* Referring to the controversy as to the position of the Evangelical body in the Episcopal Church.

Alas! alas! how often is He still wounded in the house of his friends. Nevertheless, His mercies are everlasting, as you and I, dear Mary, know by long experience. We are all very busy trying to get up a *little, tiny* church here in the wilderness; pray for us that God may bless our efforts, and the Saviour accept our offerings. It is truly a missionary station—no meeting-house of any denomination for twelve miles square—neighbourhood filling up—the habits of the people heathen—their ignorance of the way of salvation utter—but we have a sweet little sabbath-school, and I thank God that we are made the instruments of His mercy in this desolate portion of the vineyard; you must come and see our mountain home."

We have seen that her removal to Belmont was under circumstances of great trial; and at a subsequent period, when the commercial difficulties in which the country was involved had reduced her pupils to a very small number, her friends felt great apprehension lest she should sink under the anxiety inseparably connected with maintaining a large number of teachers and an expensive establishment, while the number of her pupils was too small to afford it an adequate support. They saw too with painful anticipation, as the result, that these cares were wasting her little remaining strength. Under these circumstances, one of her former teachers, to whom she was most tenderly attached, wrote to her,

suggesting her removal to Richmond, Virginia, while another friend proposed Baltimore, where she would be surrounded by a circle of attached friends, some of whom thought she might there exert an influence greater than in her present position. In reply to the former she thus wrote:

"Your letter reached me yesterday, dear cousin (a term of affectionate endearment by which she addressed those of her teachers, with whom she felt especial sympathy,) and I return you my sincere thanks for the affectionate interest you take in my affairs. I am doing badly enough, but I have no idea of Richmond. If I am forced at any time to quit Belmont, I hope it will be for Baltimore. I am too old to go to a strange place, to make new acquaintances and friends: I have neither taste nor talents for that sort of thing. In Baltimore I should be surrounded by friends and near my own family: nothing but necessity, however, will carry me away from Belmont. Perceiving as I do what a blessing rests upon my labours in my little school, I shall not willingly relinquish it. I have never seen my school half so pleasing as during this year—no wayward or refractory spirit among them, and most of them deeply interested in religion—I have the daily enjoyment of fostering and training gentle spirits for Heaven. Were it not for debt, I should live in a lower heaven here. From my heart I pity ——*

* A young lady who had been a pupil, but 'took the veil' after leaving her school.

I do not believe her delusions will last much longer than they are kept up by outward opposition. When she has completed all her schemes and immured herself to teach French in a convent, she will begin to say to herself, 'this is just what I should have had to do had I held on to my natural friends, and in what do I serve God better than they do?' If she had been at the death bed of her aunt ———, she would have seen there what might have awakened her to the truth. If she had seen the beloved wife and mother resign her distracted husband and helpless children to the Saviour whom she trusted, in unshaken faith, and with feeble smile and failing voice express her willingness to depart and be with Christ, spending her expiring breath in healing the breaches of family discord, and particularly enduring the contradiction of sinners,—she would have seen that *Religion, true Religion*, is the worship of the heart; the resignation, not the abandonment of God's best gifts." . . . . . She thus wrote to her friend in Baltimore.

My dear ——,

It has been long since I have written to you, but the purport of this letter will explain to you without words why it has been so. Some time since, my friends at West River wrote me that G—— had said if I wished to come to Baltimore and take a day-school, I could get a good school at once.

I then thought I might struggle through here, and *every year brings with it such a precious little tithe offering* to God from my flock, that I have been most reluctant to resign my charge. But it seems to me at present to be so manifestly my duty, that if I can accomplish it I will at once give up. I have had repeated invitations to go to Richmond, and there is now a very favourable opening in that place, but home and friends are strong attractions for the exile who has been so long freezing in the Kamskatka I am in. The desire of my heart is to have a small house out of the bustle, with a breath of air, and a few flowers out of doors, room enough for my family within, and a school-house disconnected, with three or four class rooms. I should then be fixed perfectly to my mind, especially if I were within reach of some quiet, humble-minded, low-church preacher, who knew nothing among his people but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. To feed the lambs of Christ's flock, and lead them by the still and living waters of a pure faith is all the desire of my heart. Does it not grieve your heart, dear ——, to see ecclesiastical pride and arrogance lording it over God's heritage? I have not been well lately, and my spirits are languid. Pecuniary matters press harder and harder upon me, and when, overwhelmed by the waves of temporal and personal griefs, I fly to the ark for refuge, and think to rejoice in the prosperity of Zion, I look around in

vain—all is confusion, strife, and every evil work. But no more than Julian succeeded in building up again the temple which God had cast down, shall these aspirants to divine rights succeed in rebuilding that which the blessed Reformation cast down by the power of the same God. I wish you could be here next Sabbath. Six of my pupils expect to unite themselves to the company of God's faithful people, in the communion of Christ, our passover. They expected to have been confirmed, but Bishop Meade having been prevented coming, they will unite in the sacrament. I know you would be pleased with my school. There is a gentle, serene, and kind spirit reigning in it which would suit you. Even —— has come greatly under the influence of it. It will be a sad day to many when I break up here, but it must be done, and if so, the sooner the better. Write to me, dear ——, candidly, your opinion of the prospect of my succeeding in Baltimore."

At the instigation of Miss Mercer's nearest relative, a maternal maiden aunt to whom she was much attached, the friend thus addressed wrote to her in reply, urging the entire abandonment of her engagements, and expressing the desire of her aunt that she should spend the remainder of her days with her; Miss M. thus replies:

"No, my dear ——, I have no feeling but of warm gratitude for your kind interest in my wel-

fare, and could I take your advice and sell out here, I should certainly do it, but that is much easier to plan than to execute. One prosperous year of my school would make me independent, or nearly so, but the evil is in waiting for that. It would take a little volume to describe my situation to you on paper. Were you here, you would see a whole neighbourhood depending on me for support, and that many plans of improvement for this most desolate region would be crushed by my leaving here. You would find a lovely family of five motherless children, sweetly fixed, well trained, and happy, in their retired country home, who would have no protection, were I to give them up. Dear M——, could you be here one day, you would understand why I have struggled on, and endured the griefs and mortifications of my lot rather than move. I have always felt it as a source of satisfaction to me that it pleases God to give me day by day my daily bread, and I have no desire for a lot in the land, but I have every reason to believe that my occupation is an appointment of God, since He has so richly blessed my school. . . . . Were I to give up my school, I should certainly take employment in some one else's school, and still devote myself to the service of God in the education of the children of God."

It was amid such difficulties and labours, that the last few years of Miss Mercer's life were passed, devoted with untiring assiduity, and ever increasing

self-denial to the accomplishment of the duties of the mission to which she was appointed. The incidents of one day were but the type of those of the next, and her life passed in a ceaseless round of diligent discharge of sacred occupations. The number of her pupils fluctuated from year to year, under influences which operated upon the country at large. In times of prosperity it was great, while commercial or agricultural difficulties were felt in the diminution of her classes.

Whilst she ever bestowed a just degree of attention on those branches of study which are considered essential to the formation of the character of a cultivated and intelligent female, she still continued to regard the development of the Christian affections, and the formation of intelligent piety as the one point of essential importance, convinced that the great hold of religion is upon the affections, and that the appeal of the Creator in the word of God, "My son, give me thine heart," is made with a certain knowledge of the constitution of that being whose nature he has organized. She thought with Pascal—the inimitable Pascal—that "reason acts slowly, and with so many views upon so many principles which it is necessary should always be present, that it is perpetually dropping asleep, and is lost for want of having all its principles ever present to it. The affections do not act thus. They act *instantaneously*, and are always ready for action." With this view, she always aimed at the

production of an impression on the *hearts* of her pupils, in early years; knowing that if this were accomplished, a door was opened through which light and knowledge would flow in upon the intellect according to the circumstances of the individual case. Hence it was her constant aim to cultivate the feeling of piety, of *religiousness*, as it has been termed by a late able writer, in place of filling the understanding, merely, with abstract propositions, which can exert no influence except upon the head.

But on this as on other subjects, we may permit her to express her own views. At a very early period in her career of teaching, she thus addresses the mother of two of her pupils:

"I have many times since the girls returned to school thought, my dear Mrs. ——, of writing to you; for, although standing nearly in the relation of a stranger to you, I have it perhaps in my power to offer the sweetest consolation to your heart, in the assurances of esteem and approbation which I can so justly bestow upon your precious children.

"I wish I could tell you, or rather I wish I could make you conscious without telling you, how dear to me, how undeviatingly correct, how attentive to their duties and observant of my wishes, how amiable to their young companions, and how deeply impressed with the solemn and affecting truths of religion they both, but especially ——, have been since the death of their beloved brother.

"Her father and yourself will, I am convinced, have the highest and most exquisite source of enjoyment open to you in the development of her mind and heart; she has a fine intellect, cheerful temper, generous and affectionate heart, and an elevation of spirit which will lead her to higher walks of thought and feeling, than those of the low-minded and sordid world who pursue their soulless course,

"'With leaden eyes that love the ground.'

"Happy, thrice happy will her lot be! For even could we for one moment believe that the hopes of religion were not to be realized in another world; yet, I am persuaded that the expectations of one, possessed of genuine Christian faith, produce the most exquisite bliss of which the human heart is susceptible; and the degree of purity which is the necessary consequence of constantly aiming at a perfect standard of purity, opens a thousand sources of enjoyment, and closes a thousand avenues of pain to the heart.

"When I think what a heavenly state life would be, if the modesty, charity, purity, and elevation of soul of the true disciple of Christ presided in every heart, I feel as if every energy I possessed must be put into requisition, and all were too little for the object I have to effect, which is, to make these precious charges of mine not only happy in the possession of the only source of unfailing felicity, but use-

ful in communicating the same blessing to those who are found within the sphere of this influence."

Amid all the trials and distresses incident to her condition at Belmont, she thus writes to one of her friends: "Soon after I came home I found a great seriousness growing among my scholars, and I have been entirely devoted to that subject for three weeks past. I wish I could describe the scenes I have had here around me. It pleased God on Sunday, the 28th of May, to send us truly a shower of blessing; no less than ten of my pupils seemed suddenly, and without any visible means sufficient to satisfy our minds, to be occupied with a sense of sin. The movement was not noticed on my part or that of any other, and yet it continued to go on, and in the course of the week two others came in, and certainly to all present appearances they are changed creatures. I see thus far no change for the worse. Dear ——, if you but knew how I feel while I see as it were the immortal soul struggling into being! I dare not touch the work which God is so manifestly doing himself. I fear to speak, and I fear not to speak, I am walking softly before God. I feel as though He had said, 'Wait and thou shalt see the salvation of the Lord.' 'Be still and know that I am God.' Oh, pray with me, and for me. What is the whole world in comparison with one of these little ones? If you could but see how sweet these dear children are! I have not time to write to-day, but I long to hear from

you. Have you read D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation? What a fascinating book it is. I have volumes to say about many things, but I cannot think of any thing, scarcely, except the blessing of God, which He has so mercifully sent to compensate me for my many troubles and perplexities. These are not abated, but their bitterness is taken away."

This was written in one of the earlier years of her residence at Belmont, and the close of her career of duty was marked by an effort perfectly in accordance with her previous walk. The duties of the school were to be brought to a conclusion for the year, at the end of July, and on the 20th of June, 1846, we find her thus addressing Bishop Meade.

RT. REV. AND DEAR SIR,—

I have been hoping through the year that you would have been able to make some appointment to visit us at Belmont before the close of my school, but learning how indifferent your health was, I had nearly abondoned the hope, when I was informed I might still look for you, and immediately announced the intelligence to my children, who have indeed been hungering and thirsting for the regular preaching of the gospel. As is usual, a marked seriousness has followed the year's exercises, and it wanted but a spark to touch the kindling spirits, and the flame was ready to burst forth. Dear Mr. Adie has

by the wisdom and power of God been withdrawn for a season from his office, and we are about to disperse for the vacation, without one being added to the visible church, although I trust and believe that several have been received into the Covenant of grace. Mr. Andrews promised certainly to be with us in May, but I have not even heard from him. What would I not give for a few hours' visit from you and him during the next ten days. Sure I am that it would be felt on the eternal destiny of some souls, if you could come. My school has never been so well ordered, so happy, so studious, and so gently led on to a state of preparation as during this session, and I think you would be pleased to spend a quiet day or two with us. Say you will come, and you shall have undisturbed possession of a quiet room, and not be asked for any thing but your pastoral blessing. Permit me, my dear sir, now to express, what I have ever felt and feel more and more, my entire confidence and veneration, my gratitude, respect, and sympathy for your firm and faithful Christian course through life, and which I know and am persuaded will be unswerving till the full effulgence of the throne of Truth shall burst upon your risen soul in eternal glory. There is no warmer prayer drawn by the necessities of our dependent nature from the heart of your friend in Christ, than that it may be so."

It could not, of course, be supposed, by any one

at all conversant with the workings of the human heart, and the strength of that principle of rebellion against God, which ever marks its actings in greater or less degree, when not subdued by the power of the Spirit, that all who were subjected to her influence received the impression of her character. Her patience was often tried, and her faith in God's promises tested by the perverse opposition of her pupils to all the efforts of her love, sometimes manifested in open acts of hostility and contempt, and at others by a silent resistance. She was ever ready to meet the one with a firm and decided yet affectionate exertion of authority, and to overcome the other by patient continuance in well-doing, and she was sometimes permitted to see the harvest gathered from soil the least promising, even after all hope of such result had passed away. Among the pupils of her earliest years, were two who were remarkable for the apparent unimpressibility of their characters; they left her school, glorying in their freedom from its control. Years passed over them, with their chequered influences of joy and sorrow, when circumstances which Miss Mercer did not hesitate to consider special providences, led her to the places where they dwelt, just in time to witness in each the power of the principle she had so laboriously implanted, to retain its vitality through a long winter of neglect, and, in the hour of need, to spring up as a source of comfort to the soul; and to receive their

thanks for the patient efforts she had made to imbue their minds with truth, which ultimately assumed dominion over their hearts, and enabled them to depart in the hope of a blessed immortality.

We have thus seen that from the commencement to the conclusion of her career as an instructress, the same point had ever been before her as the object at which she aimed, and the blessing of God had rested, year after year, on her faithful efforts to promote the good of her pupils, and His glory amongst men. It may not be uninteresting to turn attention to the means employed to produce so remarkable a result. Among these, the most prominent place, certainly, is due to the influence of a holy, consistent example. Her daily, hourly walk was a constant illustration of the virtues to the practice of which she strove to draw her pupils. Thus, one of those pupils whose opportunities for observation have been large, both before and since she was brought into association with Miss Mercer, says: "She afforded a perfect example of all that the mere moralist calls good and venerable, as well as of those virtues which are essentially Christian." . . . . . "The influence she possessed over the minds of her pupils was very great, which would certainly have been destroyed, had any inconsistency in her actions seemed to mock the power of that religion she so sedulously inculcated."

Her religious instructions were communicated as

she walked by the way, when she lay down, and when she rose up. Nay, the very moral atmosphere of the institution was redolent of Christian truth. It was her effort to seclude herself and her charge as much as possible from every adverse influence. One of her pupils, alluding to this says: "I once heard her, when urged to receive newspapers into her school, reply, with great warmth, 'What! would they have me introduce the world into my little retreat, where my only enjoyment is found in being separate from all its noise and bustle?' " Yet was her spirit the furthest possible removed from moroseness or asceticism. In her renunciation of *the world*, she never felt disposed to crush the joyous feelings of youth, or damp the ardour of that spirit of affection by which we are bound to our fellow-men. She looked abroad on all the beauties and bounties of Creation, and within, at the adaptation of man, (the crowning work of the whole grand united scheme,) to find pleasure in the position in which he has been placed by Him whose wisdom is especially exhibited in the wonderful adaptation of all the complex works of His hand to the circumstances by which they are surrounded, and she strove rather to develope the capacity for enjoyment, than to curtail it in its actings. Her views of the vanity and emptiness of many of the pursuits by which man perverts his powers, and frustrates his own designs, were, as we have seen, very decided. But

she ever endeavoured to send forth her pupils, armed against the allurements of false pleasures, by the knowledge of a more excellent way to a more certain and present joy. As one of her pupils remarks, "Those whose circumstances cast them into general society, she armed against its dangers, not with superstitious terrors, but with 'the whole armour of God,' teaching them that when the heart is right before God, outward circumstances, whatever they may be, only afford channels through which Christian feeling may be manifested as well in trifles as in greater things."

But she did not rely simply on a general impression on the heart. She was fully aware of the importance of an accurate knowledge of the word of God, and a correct comprehension of its teachings; and laboured most assiduously to convey this knowledge to the understanding of her pupils. For this purpose she prepared a volume of "Studies for Bible classes," with the view, as she remarks in the preface to it, "of training the young to search the Scriptures of Truth for the evidence of those things which they have been taught by the Church," in order that they may "know the certainty of the things which belong to their eternal life."

The lessons were systematically arranged, commencing with the existence of God, passing through the attributes of the Deity, the divinity and humanity of Christ, and the existence and offices of the

Spirit,—to the relations existing between the triune God and his creatures, and embracing the various duties from man to God and his fellow, growing out of those relations. A text on each subject was furnished as a key note, and the pupils, provided with a reference Bible and Concordance, were required to "search out correlative texts, examine, compare, and transcribe them." When these were submitted to her, she made them the occasion for questions, by which to elicit the extent of their knowledge, and the character of their impressions on the subject of the lesson; and entered into such explanations and exhortations as were appropriate, taking care that they should not be misled by mere *literal* connexion. The manner in which she discharged this duty was impressive in the highest degree. Her long-tried, faithful, and sympathizing friend and fellow-worker, Miss Condy, thus speaks of her mode of communicating religious instruction:

"It would be almost impossible to give to any but a member of dear Miss Mercer's family circle an idea of her value to her household generally, and of the importance of her instructions to those placed particularly under her charge. It was in the familiarity of social converse, after the labours of the school, in the hours of recreation, when all, teachers and scholars, sought her society, that some of her most valuable lessons were given, and rendered so attractive by her peculiarly affectionate,

though always impressive manner, that but few failed to listen to and profit by her most casual remarks. But never did she appear so interesting to us as when engaged in the duties of the Sabbath. Her health for some time was too delicate to admit of her rising at the early hour appointed for the entering upon our week-day duties; but she never failed, if tolerably well, to be with us on Sunday morning. She would read to us an interesting portion of scripture, generally from the Psalms, and then point our attention to some striking passage, in such an earnest and solemn manner, that the most thoughtless could not escape reflection. Her Bible class was remarkably interesting,—her little book will give some idea how it was conducted. The clergymen who have occasionally visited Belmont have been edified and much pleased with this mode of instructing her pupils in the essential doctrines of the church. Never did her mind seem so free from all worldly care and anxiety, her countenance appear so bright and cheerful, or her intellect so active, as on the Sabbath, which she devoted exclusively to spiritual concerns and duties. I have known her to be so exhausted when the hour for retirement came, by her efforts for the good of her pupils on that day, as to remain for some time to all appearance lifeless. This shows what extreme delicacy of constitution she had to contend with through all her arduous labours.

"We miss our dear Miss Mercer every hour in the day; our thoughts and hearts are ever dwelling upon the recollection of all she was to us—of all we have lost with her. But on the Sabbath, how we long for her blessed presence! 'Rest, rest,' have I often heard her beg for, and can we wish her back in this unquiet world?

"She often repeated, and admired much, one of Charles Wesley's hymns, in a little collection called 'Village Hymns.' One verse I often heard her repeat:—

> 'This languishing head is at rest,
> Its thinking and aching are o'er,
> This quiet, immovable breast
> Is heav'd by affliction no more.' "

The following letter is among the latest expressions of her feeling addressed to a very intimate friend.

Belmont, August 31st, 1846.

"I long for rest of mind and body, and sincerely wish I could be with you again, but next week my labours open upon me; I must use all my energies. Sincerely do I pray that God would raise up some one to take my place, and let me enter into my rest.

"I have been severely tried by the sudden and rapid progress of dear ——'s illness; it came on me like a thunder-clap, but God's will be done. The attack on my lungs last winter has had an effect

upon my arms and hands that prevents my writing much.

"Indeed, dear M., I feel a very sensible failure from year to year. I look forward with intense desire for the rest that is our blessed heritage. Ever the same, and entirely yours. M. Mercer."

Miss Coxe, of Cincinnati, having addressed a letter to Miss Mercer, inquiring as to her method of communicating religious instruction, Miss Mercer replies:

Dear Madam,—

I have just returned home after an absence of some weeks, as this is my vacation, and urged by the consciousness that my abilities to do good are far on their wane, I hasten to show my willingness to strengthen the hands of one who I trust is destined to much usefulness.

That God has often visited my school with an outpouring of his Holy Spirit, and that many, many dear pupils have been added to the true church from it, I most thankfully acknowledge; but by what means the divine work has been accomplished I cannot pretend to say. My own view of the subject is, that by patient and prayerful waiting upon the use of the Scriptures, searching them faithfully as the source of truth, and watching to make the appointed use of every varying providence that each

hour brings forth, I have been taught to look to Christ, and to Him alone myself, and thus being taught, I have been enabled to teach others.

Added to this deep impression of knowing nothing among men but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, I have adopted more system than is generally used in teaching religion, and as system is, I believe, always more perfect as it is more simple, I have attempted scarcely any thing but to train them to "search the scriptures" for themselves, by a method which I will presently explain.

To comply as well as possible with your request, I have taken the liberty of transmitting to you my first and only effort at authorship. The "Ethics," you will readily see, have no other aim but to draw the attention of my pupils to the truth, that morality is the law of God, and to be found pure only in the Bible. The *arrangement* of the little volume of Bible studies you will understand. Our Sabbath occupations are light; we keep late hours on that holy day, and I willingly admit the plea of servants and children that it is a day of *rest* for those who have laboured during the week. This I concede, because I find it very difficult to command the attention, and regulate the animal spirits of children during *a long day*. Before breakfast the girls recite verses and hymns; after breakfast we study the Bible lesson, which comes in regular succession according to the direction of the manual. We have

always a Sabbath-School, in which the teachers and some of the young ladies engage as instructors. We have either morning or evening service, as we are favoured with public worship or not. When we have no minister, we read the evening service and a sermon, devoting the morning to Bible studies, reading, teaching, and good books. In the evening, before prayers, we recite the Bible lesson, in which, as each young person reads in regular succession the texts searched out, I make such remarks as I think expedient; for instance, if I find a text irrelevant, I take the opportunity of making use of it to instruct incidentally upon some other point. Thus, I say, I think you have mistaken the import of your text; it relates to such a subject, and means so and so; and by the by, we teachers all know how often this indirect instruction, coming as suggestion, makes much more impression than if direct. If a text is read, which gives me the opportunity to do so, I seize it, to urge more strongly upon them a doctrine which they do not appreciate, or a duty which they have neglected. Some of our lessons are continued from Sabbath to Sabbath; that on the divinity of our Lord occupies us six Sabbaths, and I have never been more thankful for a privilege than for that of having so studied it for their sakes. I never doubted the divinity of our Lord, but I had no idea of the mass of evidence in the Old Testament, nor of the force of His appeal, "They are

they that testify of me." After our Bible lesson, the day is closed by evening prayer, in which I have been always in the habit of reading a chapter and selecting some important texts, generally bearing upon the subject of the Bible lesson, which I enforce by the strongest comments I can make. We always sing in family prayers.

Thus you see, dear madam, there is nothing new in the means God uses with us, except the studying separate subjects in our Bible lessons; and this I adopted because I have often heard very good persons maintain such very unscriptural opinions, apparently because they had not made the Bible its own expositor, on such points, and compared all correlative texts. If you do me the honour to read my little volume of Ethics, will you kindly read to the *end* before you criticise, and then return and review such parts as do not meet your approbation, and express fully and freely your views to me, as I may ere long revise it for republication.

I had once the *pleasure* of riding from church with Bishop M'Ilvaine.* I shall never forget it, and if he will accept them, pray present my most respectful regards to him. The blessing of God is upon his labours, and will be so. I shall be happy again to be refreshed by your zeal in the first of all causes—Christian education,

And remain, dear madam, yours truly,

M. Mercer.

* Miss Coxe is a near connexion of the Bishop of Ohio.

The volume of Ethics to which Miss Mercer here alludes, is one of the most important results of her labour. It is in the form of lectures to young ladies, which she employed as a text-book in her instructions in moral philosophy. It is admirably adapted to its purpose, conveying in chaste, yet glowing language the feelings of a sanctified heart. She adopts the word of God as the only source of knowledge, as well of the practical duties of life, as of our relations to the Author of our being, and endeavours to explain and enforce the principles there laid down for the formation of character, and the government of life. It is a work well worthy of the diligent study of every woman who desires to attain to a high degree of moral worth.

She thus opens her instructions.

MY VERY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:

Bright and glorious is the morn of life, when youth and inexperience launch their light bark upon the sparkling tide of a new existence. Their broad pennon bears, in its silken folds, hope on the wing pursuing distant pleasures; their bright streamers flutter in the stirring breeze, revealing curious devices of anticipated joys; the spray casts around the vessel's prow showers of diamonds; the dipping oars send back, on the circling waves, patines of burnished silver, and flashes of living gold; and softly, as the receding waters close behind the stern, they

murmur a gentle, kind adieu. Life is then all poetry—all pleasure; and well do the aged remember the magic power of youthful feelings and imaginations, and what a dazzling glow their own enthusiasm spread over the sober realities of life. But far from the promised haven for which they sailed is the shore where their broken voyage has ended. Many and sorrowful have been the shipwrecks which they have witnessed: gay hearts swept away before the receding tide of fate; confident spirits sunk in the raging deep, or dashed on the rocky coast of disappointment and despair. To one who thus looks back upon the sad vicissitudes of a past life, there is something deeply affecting in the unconscious mirth of the young, sporting heedlessly on the verge of an ocean of trouble, upon which they are but too willing to embark, without rudder and without compass.

To furnish you, before you commence your voyage, with the means of descrying approaching danger, and of protecting yourselves from the fate of the inconsiderate and the ignorant, is my present aim. To dangers you must be exposed. May you, from the experience of others, learn in time so to direct your course as to exalt you to honour and usefulness, to the favour of God and of man; to the portion of happiness which is destined for the good here, and to that perfect bliss which is reserved for the virtuous hereafter. Let me prevail with you to

lay aside the levity natural to your time of life, and allow me to command your attention, your deep and serious attention, while I endeavour to explain to you the principles of that science which has for its object the happiness and the perfection of the human soul: for moral philosophy may be defined the science of human happiness and virtue. The term moral, strictly speaking, signifies what belongs to conduct. Philosophy (more than mere science) means the love of knowledge. The beautiful significancy of the term moral philosophy, then, should not be lost sight of. It means the love of that practical wisdom, which, if pursued aright, and with ardour, leads to every thing that is noble and virtuous, lovely, and of good report; and aids in preparing the soul for heaven, by saving it below from the contagion of folly and vice.

Since our object is always to lead the mind up to God, and to promote gratitude and devotion to him, we will now pause and survey the wonderful palace, with its vaulted roof, where the mind sits supreme, and listens to the wonders reported by his alert and skilful ministers, the senses. What is there that the human mind cannot compass by their aid? No curious object of rare and beautiful in the mineral, vegetable or animal kingdom, from the elephant to the mite, can escape the scrutiny of the naturalist. Does he not see another world existing around us? The most transparent atmosphere, the crystal foun-

tain, the petals of a little flower, are they not to him redolent of life in all its exquisite variety of animated being? How he hangs over the delicate mimosa, and wonders to see it shrink from his delicate touch, as if modesty informed it. From the palms and banyans of the tropics, to the firs and mosses of the arctic regions, he cons, and compares, and describes, and names them all. All—from the adamantine centre round which our earth concentrates, to the orient pearl brought from the ocean depths, to the gold and gems from the mountain heights—all fills his wondering soul with rapturous praise. But chiefly the infinite beauty of insects, shell-fish, flowers, and, above all, *birds* excite his soul to indescribable emotions of delight. If God had given me but sight, and offered me no other object of vision but the little ruby-breasted humming-bird, hanging, as I have often seen him, over the pensile flowers of the graceful scarlet fuchsia, lifting them one by one to insert his long bill in quest of his delicate food, I could not contemplate this single evidence of the wisdom, power and goodness of the Deity, without being raised, refined and purified. But the little gem of animated nature glances athwart my view, like the coloured spectrum of the solar beams cast by the moving prism; and I have but time to realize that he is a living creature, with flesh, and bones, and skin, a heart and lungs, a beautiful arched head with senses like my

own—when borne on his fine, light, flexible wings to a far height above the earth to which I cling, his keen eye penetrates the distance to where fresh flowers are blooming, and there, as odorous vapours circle round his head, he darts from cup to cup, and sips the honeyed stores, and hastens on to seek new pleasures. Would you know how these delightful images are communicated to the mind. Examine, then, the eye. First, see how the precious instrument of vision is folded to rest at night; even the sun himself withdraws his light for a season, that the wearied sight of men, and beasts, and birds may rest, and be refreshed. Folded in its fringed curtains, it lies unconscious of the world around, until stimulated by the returning light, the windows are once more opened, and day pours in, bringing with it all that the endless variety of symmetrical forms and harmonious colours of nature can offer to enchant the mind. But how is all the immense space before us, the great concave of the heavens, with all its glories, and the wide-spreading earth, with oceans, rivers, mountains, valleys, plains and cities, brought distinctly within the compass of the visual orb? By simple laws, my dear children, with which it belongs to another department of your education to make you acquainted. I will only say here, that certain lenses receive the rays of light which come from every point of all the various objects of sight before you, and refraction concentrates them, so as

to bring them to a focus on the retina, which is the interior surface of a dark chamber, prepared to exclude all light, except that which enters through the lenses to which is committed the office of arranging the objects of vision in their perfect order. Thus far we have an apparatus for sight. The camera obscura in our library is made in imitation of it, to receive and reflect the images of external objects; but here we must stop in our investigation of the theory of vision. How these pictures on the retina are conveyed to the mind, and preserved in the memory, we know not. The impressions made by them on the mind have been called *ideas;* but, lately, the hypothesis to which this term belongs has been rejected. For myself, I have much reverence for it; and I do believe that the images formed on the retina may, by a similar process, be again reflected and contracted to smaller and smaller spectra, until reduced, like the elementary particles of matter, to such dimensions that there may be whole galleries of painting in the palace of memory, landscapes, buildings, portraits, historical pictures; whatever the mind's eye hath seen worth treasuring up. And from such a process we might find the solution of the enigma of objects being inverted on the retina, and yet never so seen. But you have much to study upon the subject of the senses. The ear is quite as curious as the eye, being constructed to communicate sounds; the interior structure resem-

bling musical instruments, and the whole being covered with a thin membrane, through which the vibrations of the atmosphere, produced by different sounds, come in contact with the nerves of the ear, and convey a corresponding impression to the mind. Immediately connected with, and dependent upon the sense of hearing, is the power of speech, the noblest faculty of man. In vain would the flexible tubes of the throat have been attached to the elastic chest of the lungs; "the ready, swift and tuneful tongue" would have been mute for ever, had the ear not received and aided the mind in the arrangement of articulate sounds into language. Smelling and taste are conveyed in the same way, by the nerves of their peculiar organs. But the wonderful office of the senses is in conveying abstract thought from one mind to another—even from one generation to another: so that, by a glance of the eye, or an inclination of the ear, we are able to hold high converse with the ancient world, to know the thoughts of our first parents, and enter into their feelings; to pity the exiles from Eden; to admire the wisdom of Moses, or the prophetic inspiration of Elijah, or Isaiah; time, space, the very confusion of tongues, all yield to the magic power of the senses; but one who does not use the senses as the media through which knowledge is conveyed to the mind, but derives the highest enjoyments from the mere impression of external things upon the senses

themselves, is unworthy the possession of such blessings. The gratification of the eye, in the objects of beauty with which he surrounds himself; the gratification of the *ear*, in the excessive cultivation of music; the gratification of the taste, in Epicurean viands; the gratification of smelling, in luxurious and costly perfumes; and of touch, in the velvets, satins, fine furs, &c., with which he surrounds his body, makes man a sensualist. These indulgences are generally palliated, by applying to them the term *taste;* but a refined taste implies intellectual enjoyment, derived *through* the senses, rather than *from* them. This taste is a faculty of the *mind*, and exercises itself in moral and intellectual operations upon subjects made known to it, through the agency of the senses. Taste, for instance, is delighted with the abstract quality of *fitness*, or the suitability of things for the purposes for which they were created; and while the eye beholds the light in the heavenly bodies, and feels the beauty of their different glories, taste follows philosophy into her deepest cells; when shut in from the visible heavens, she traces their distances and velocities, and dwells upon the wisdom, goodness and power which measured their orbits, balanced their respective weights, gave them forms to correspond with their distances, and satellites and circles of luminous air, to supply their deficiency of light from solar beams. A sensualist is in the lowest grade of

humanity. He may improve the discriminating power of all the senses, but he is still merely a refined brute; while the man of pure good taste rests not in their delight, but receives from the pleasure they afford a mental impetus, which carries him far, far above the earth; even where Thomson soared, when he caught the eternal song of saints around the throne, and poured forth his hymn of *praise*,

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good!"

---

## LECTURE XVIII.

### HONOURING GOD BY OUR LIVES AND CONVERSATIONS.

Whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.—1 Cor., x., 31.

To honour God and to glorify God are synonymous terms; and nothing has been more unjustly condemned than the use of such expressions. Men say plausibly, how can the creature add any thing to the Creator? how can a worm of the dust give glory to the God of heaven and earth? Certainly we can add nothing to the intrinsic character, or actual possessions of the Lord of all; but the expression conveys, and means to convey, a very different idea. It means that by using voluntarily, as we are enabled to do, the power of the Deity to become in our own persons clear manifestations of that glory of

God which is displayed in the perfection of his creatures, we shall produce a moral influence upon all around us, which will lead to a general adoption of principles and conduct such as will increase the perfection and happiness of his creatures. The perfection and happiness of God's creatures is his greatest glory; therefore, whatever adds to the perfection and happiness of his creatures, adds to his glory, or the *manifestation* of his glorious attributes to the created world.

If God is revealed to us in a glorious light as the Creator of the world, certainly there is nothing which contributes more to that glory than the creation of the human soul with all its wonderful faculties; and to bring these faculties to maturity, and to exhibit man in that state of perfection of which his nature is susceptible, is certainly to augment the display of his Maker's glory. Every individual instance of superior moral elevation of character and conduct is calculated to produce a pious emulation, as well as a higher and stronger perception of the glorious intentions of the Creator with regard to us. It is an evidence that he, indeed, intended us to be examples of that glory of his in creation, which is manifested in all his works, but in nothing so much as in a *good man*, a *good woman*, or a *good child.* As I believe, according to the doctrine just advanced, that examples are the means appointed by the Creator for the extension of his glory, as it is written,

"Let men see your good works, that they may glorify your Father in heaven," I will, at present, endeavour to set before you such instances from real life, and so *recent*, as to be fair examples of what each one of us may be if we will. John Howard, deservedly called the "philanthropist," may serve as the instance of a man who lived to the glory of God; Elizabeth Fry shall be our *good woman*, and for a *good child*, since I cannot cite any who have been so conspicuous as to add much by their active virtues to the glory of their Maker, I shall content myself in showing you in what way it is possible even for "babes and sucklings to perfect praise." How beautiful to our eyes is the delicate rose-bud, when it first bursts the folding leaves that have concealed it from our sight, and shows its little fringed cone of tender green. It is not to compare in grace of form, in beauty of colour, in rich and delicate odor, to the perfect rose; but, after a long winter, the sight of the first spring bud brings with it more delight to our senses than a wilderness of summer roses. Because the promise is so sweet and refreshing, and we *anticipate* all that is lovely from that which we see. So, the earlier in life children give indication of their virtuous dispositions, their anxiety to prove their love of God by some active, persevering effort to do good, the more we look forward to their glorifying God hereafter in their lives and conversations. Nor is there a sight upon earth

more calculated to excite the reverence of man for the great power of God, than to witness that dominion of his grace in a young heart, of which we sometimes see such remarkable instances.

Cornelia M——, the daughter of my neighbour, and my god-child, was a lovely, gentle, innocent, intelligent, sprightly, but diligent child. Although playful, she was singularly given to *serious meditation* from her earliest childhood. At seven years of age she was teacher in the Sunday-school, and so anxious to instruct the little slaves, in her father's house, to read the Scriptures, that she would *weep* for their averseness to learning; "for how," she said, "would they ever know their duty to God, if they would not learn to read the Bible." Soon after she attained her eighth year, this dear child was taken with an inflammation of the throat, which, after a very short period of extreme agony, terminated in her death. During her illness, the admiration of all around her was excited by her patience, her consideration for others, her prayers for her friends, and for *all mankind*, and, finally, by the triumph of her faith in God in the trying hour of death. "I am in a great agony," she said; "I am going very fast; I hope I may live to see my dear mother and sisters," who were from home, but every hour expected to return. "I want to see them, and then I want to die, and go to heaven." "Mammy," she said, with infantine simplicity, to her weeping nurse

"don't cry for me; God is going to take me to heaven to be *his own dear little child.*" Nor was there self-complacency in this assurance of faith; for, being in extreme agony, she exclaimed, "Oh, God! have mercy upon me, a poor *sinful child.*" Her father replied, "God loves you, my dear; you are not sinful, but a good, obedient little child." "Oh! no, father," she replied, "God knows I am a sinner; *I* am not good." So that it was faith in God's mercy through Christ which strengthened her to *desire* to go "through the valley and shadow of death, fearing no evil." Blessed child! sweet, early blossom of paradise! how art thou since expanded into celestial glory, planted for ever by the rivers of life! May our deaths be like yours, gentle, sweet, full of love, and hope and peace in believing. None could doubt that she realized the nature of death; for shortly before she had seen her little sister, a pale corpse, laid in her coffin, and committed to the earth. No martyrs ever proved more clearly their trust in the promises of God. Sweet, happy cherub! since your triumphant spirit winged its rejoicing flight to the kingdom of eternal glory, the conqueror of nations, the envy and admiration of ephemeral man, the great Napoleon, has *fretted out* the peevish remnant of his proud career, "like a beacon on the breast of the ocean;" and if *his* conqueror still walks the earth, who, that thinks of the frailty of human greatness, but must anticipate the proba-

ble difference between the death of Wellington and that of the beautiful child pluming her dove-like wings for her heavenward flight, conscious of being beloved by the Glory of *all* the nations, the Conqueror of sin and death.

In the history of ancient nations we are led to inquire what became of that miserable portion of human society who, from sickness, from vice, or from any of the various ills that flesh is heir to, were reduced to destitution among them—that class which fills our alms-houses and hospitals. We hear in every history, sacred and profane, of a prison to incarcerate the body of the unfortunate debtor, to chain the miserable criminal in dungeons, when his liberty or life had been forfeited to the laws of his country, or to the despotism of man; and to confine, in heavy fetters, the captive monarch, or the rival chief; but where are there any vestiges in their antiquities, of the asylums for widows and orphans, for the blind, the deaf and dumb; where their houses of refuge for the reformation and education of vagrant youth, their alms-houses—"where age and want sit smiling at the gate." Whence is it, that there seems to have been no provision for suffering poverty; but the candidate for heaven, the poor, good man, "laid by the road-side, and the dogs licked his sores." Whence the wonderful change which we now behold; for while we no longer see some ghastly, dust-covered mummy enshrined in a magnificent mau-

soleum, sufficient for a living king and his retinue to dwell in, our lands are adorned with beautiful, bright edifices, on every front of which Christian charity seems to be emblazoned in words of living fire. It is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts which has thus changed our public institutions, substituting the active principle of serving the living, for burying the dead; expending the resources of society in the promotion of human happiness and virtue, instead of exhausting the lives and treasures of nations, in splendid temples for the absurd and disgusting worship of some profligate woman, a Venus, a Juno, or a Diana, the records of whose infamous lives should be banished from our schools. The same spirit which has wrought such a change in the objects to which the wealth of man is devoted, has changed the direction of heroic minds, and the philanthropist is now considered as a greater man than the conqueror. Since Jesus has introduced a new criterion of human perfection, thousands on thousands have felt that, if the believer in Mars naturally offered the blood of slaughtered enemies to his God, as an acceptable gift, the believer in Jesus Christ must offer the sacrifice of every selfish principle of his own nature, and load the shrine of his God with works of love and mercy, to the just and to the unjust. Such a worshipper of the true God was John Howard! He was truly a Christian *hero* in spirit. Awed by no dangers,

checked by no difficulties, repressed by no failures, he was never weary in well doing. And having opened his generous heart to the enlarged views of Christian charity, his compassion was equally touched with the iron that entered into the soul of the prisoner in Turkey, in Egypt, in Russia, or in England. Wherever there was a man, that man was a brother of his soul; and that brother's groans, in his loathsome dungeon, fell upon Howard's heart, as he sat by his own cheerful fire-side, surrounded by every social comfort; and he arose and went forth on his pilgrimage, with Christ to live, to labour, and to die, for those who loved him not, who knew him not. No dazzling display of scenes to captivate the imagination gratified the latent vanity of the human heart, no pulling down of Bastiles, and casting out of the wretched inmates of monastic seclusion, excited his pride by popular applause. No: while he passed slowly through the cells of criminals, or of the miserable victims of human selfishness, he substituted a bed for the damp ground, or unchanged straw; he obtained fresh clothing for the long-forgotten tenant of some fetid cell; or he procured one cheering ray of Heaven's blessed light to shed a smile upon the darkness of despair, within the dungeon's gloom. And if these angelic visits were ever registered for fame, it was by angels at the throne of Jesus, who never cease rejoicing in the holy labours of his saints on earth.

Some years since the attention of the English nation, first awakened by John Howard, was forcibly called to the state of prison discipline in England, and a bill was reported by Mr. Brougham to parliament on the subject. To prove the possibility and the necessity for such a reform, he cited the then recent effect produced by the labours of a single benevolent individual, and that a delicate, and not very wealthy woman. Elizabeth Fry, a member of the Christian society called Friends, being in her youth one of those who are denominated gay Friends, after passing a winter in London in much company, became deeply sensible of the awful responsibility of spending time, talents, and every other means of usefulness, in selfish amusements. She therefore determined at once to dedicate herself wholly to God, in the elevated pleasures of a pious life. She soon formed a plan to attempt the reform of the prisoners in Newgate; but her husband and family thought it so enthusiastic a scheme, that it was some time before she obtained their consent. Then, when she applied to the public authorities, they again opposed her wishes, represented to her the horrid ferocity and desperate depravity of the wretched inmates of the prison. Only stimulated to perseverance by their descriptions, she urged her petitions, until at last she obtained permission to make the experiment, and, accompanied by the keeper, entered the common room of the female

prisoners, who immediately crowded around her with vulgar curiosity. She inquired, with gentle benevolence, if their situation was not very comfortless and miserable. They replied that it was. She asked them if they would not rejoice to have a friend come among them, to assist them to do something to improve their condition. With the hardened recklessness of the desperately vicious, they *laughed,* and replied: "A friend! who cares for us, or would spend their time in befriending us? We have no friend." "Yes," said she, "you *have* a Friend, and *he* has sent me here to persuade you to aid me in plans which I have for your benefit." Then she opened the Bible which she had brought with her, and read from Isaiah the following words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." These touching words she explained in tones so expressive of deep feeling, that her horrid audience were actually melted into tears, while she told them of Jesus, their Friend, the Friend of prisoners and captives; and that he had sent her to try to do them good; and she besought their assistance to effect her good wishes. They willingly consented, and entered into her plans. She made her arrangements with the aid of a committee of young ladies, to teach

them to sew and read; for, as ignorance is the parent of vice, she found that most of them could do neither. Imagination cannot realize, probably, the scene described by a young lady of the committee, who undertook to open a school for these miserable wretches, in a small room which had been appropriated for the purpose. She said, that when they crowded in tumultuously, fighting for places, and cursing and scrambling over the benches which had been arranged for their reception, she could only liken the scene to the lower regions, and felt an indescribable horror in finding herself shut up alone with them. The scene, however, was soon entirely changed. Order, cleanliness and sobriety pervaded the prison; and Mrs. Fry was daily greeted with the most perfect reverence and affection. On entering, instead of the various exhibitions of drinking, gambling, quarreling, &c., which usually prevail in the public room of a great prison, all the prisoners were to be found in groups, listening to the Bible, or some good book, while they employed their hands in a variety of work which had been provided for them by their kind protectress. After a while, however, suddenly there appeared to be a great falling away; they went back to their bad habits, neglected their work, sold their materials for drink, and Mrs. Fry appeared to be defeated in all her efforts to reclaim them. She, however, continued her unremitting labours, every day address-

ing them, and always proposing some plan for their improvement and comfort. One day, about a fortnight after the change, a woman came to her, and, bursting into tears, drew a pack of soiled cards from her pocket, threw herself on her knees before her, and begged her forgiveness; saying, that she knew, unless she obtained it, God never would forgive her. She stated, that when she was brought into the prison, and saw what was going on, she had been seized with the most determined hatred to Mrs. Fry and her plans; and had resolved to thwart and oppose her in every thing. That for this purpose she had introduced cards, and drawn away the prisoners to every sort of dissipation. But she could hold out no longer against Mrs. Fry; and she promised, if forgiven, she would never offend again. To this promise she was faithful; and, after effecting the greatest change there, Mrs. Fry went throughout England, Scotland and Ireland, establishing similar regulations under the direction of prison committees. It is now nearly twenty years since the subject was brought before parliament; and this Christian woman is still, I trust, walking her rounds of duty, with the untiring zeal of one who draws her spirit from the everlasting God. These are, then, the examples which I promised you, of persons in the ordinary walks of life, honouring God with their lives; and, as they honoured him by their deeds of benevolence, so their conversation

was always such as becomes godliness. If you are conscious that the sin of idle talking prevails among you; if you are sensible of so offending individually; or, if the sad effect of this low, disgraceful, and corrupting vice disturbs the peace and serenity of your little circle, let me entreat you, as the most certain corrective of the evil, to form some common plan for promoting the perfection and happiness of your fellow creatures. Imbue your hearts with the spirit of active charity, and the gossip of the worldly-minded will indeed sound on your ears like *idle words.* No conversation will then appear to you worthy of notice, but such as has some evident bearing upon the improvement or happiness of the human race. When this has once become the main object of your hopes, your fears, your labours, and your prayers, it will become the most interesting subject of your thoughts, and the favourite theme of your conversations. Imagine Mr. Howard, or Mrs. Fry, to return home at evening, with souls filled with images of the poor prisoners they had visited, hand-cuffed and chained, lying on a pile of filthy straw, perishing with cold and hunger, or, worse, in the horrid bondage of sin, blaspheming, drinking and fighting in their superterrene hole. Do you think they would be agreeably amused, if, when their efforts were directed to "stir up the pure minds fervently" of the young around them, to aid in their noble labours, they were called upon to join

in the childish prattle of girls discussing the ribands on their hair, or the rings on their fingers; or, in the equally contemptible jargon of young men of fashion, of their hat-rims, or coat capes, or shoe-ties, or, still worse, the cruel, wicked custom, usual with both sexes, of dissecting characters, and speaking evil of others, merely to excite some interest in their vapid conversation? *Conversation is to works what the flower is to the fruit.* A godly conversation shelters and cherishes the new-born spirit of virtue, as the flower does the fruit, from the cold, chill atmosphere of a heartless world; and the beauty of holiness expanding in conversation, gives rational anticipation of noble-minded principles ripening into the richest fruits of good works. You know the tree as well by the flower as the fruit, and never need you hope to see the fig follow the thistle flower, or grapes the wild bloom of the thorn tree. Honour God, then, with your bodies and spirits, in your lives and conversations, show forth *holiness* out of a good conversation; for the king's daughter is *all glorious within.*

## LECTURE XIX.

### THE FEAR AND LOVE OF GOD.

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride, and arrogancy.—PROV., viii., 13.

If we measure civilized man, as a species, with Christ, and consider his words, "If ye are as I am in this world, ye shall be with me in the world to come," we cannot but be astounded, and say, "Who then can be saved?" At long intervals, however, some men have arisen as witnesses for God, to show that the law is holy, just, and honourable. That it is made by the Omniscient, who knows what powers he has conferred upon his creatures, and consequently what he has a right to require. Such was Howard, such were Swartz, Oberlin, Felix Neff, Martyn, and many others: a sufficient number to prove that God requires nothing more than the best use to be made of the powers he bestows. We have then to ask, with increased anxiety, why, if God has given both the command and the power to obey it, men are living so without God in the world? Because we have most of us parted with the freedom of conscience which we all have by nature; "we have sold ourselves for naught," "we are sold under bondage to sin," "and no man hath wherewith to redeem his soul," or "ransom his brother." We

have accustomed ourselves to disregarding and violating the commands of God, until we have contracted a contemptuous disbelief of them; and now we follow our natural propensities, which are in all flesh "earthly, sensual, devilish." And how, I pray you, were the men we have named, or was ever any other man brought to illustrate the sublime principle of *holiness* by his life and conversation? Never, but by *cultivating* a just timidity as to his own performances, and so high a sense of the perfect requirements of God's law, as creates a wholesome *fear* of coming short of them. Under this state of mind, holiness becomes an object of intense desire; we see its transcendent beauty, we love it, and, consequently, we fear never to obtain it. We discover that God is its only source, and we begin to apprehend what the law means by the command, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" "Be ye perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect." Be ye perfect sons, as your Father is a perfect Father; perform your relative duties to him, and to each other, as he performs his relative duties to you. Set your whole heart, and mind, and strength to the study of his will, that, in the spirit of obedience, you may say, as Christ did, "Lo! I come do thy will, O, God!" The fear of God enjoined upon his people is not the fear which a slave has of a cruel master, but the fear that a noble-minded, affectionate son has of doing any thing to distress his father; and whoever

has not this fear, has not true love for his parent; neither can any man love God without having it in a very high degree. To obtain it, we must often and deeply consider the certainty that the God who fashioned and made us, within and without, certainly knows, at all times, the most secret thoughts of our hearts. We should always feel as if he were visibly present; as if the eye of one whom we love and fear, and to whom we are responsible, was fixed upon us; that he would reward, love us, and bless our labours, just in proportion as our thoughts and intentions were according to his holy will and commandments: and that, on the other hand, we should make ourselves odious to his holiness, if we followed the lower propensities of our animal nature. Imitate then, ye that wish for glory, honour, and immortality, the custom of the Lord Jesus Christ, who always met every exigency with Scripture, and carry about with you as a talisman, this wholesome command: "*Sanctify* the Lord of hosts in *your heart*, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread." Cultivate such an apprehension of his great sanctity, as may fill your hearts with an awe and fear of being seen, and examined thoroughly, by such a perfect Being; of being called into his presence to answer for all your follies and impurities; and to account to him for never having used the means which had been so effectual in preserving others from the pollution of sin, and in elevating

them to such eminence in virtue. Solomon says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;" and St. John says, "Perfect love casteth out fear." Let us then cultivate a wise fear of falling short in the love and obedience which we owe to the Lord our God; nor be too forward to dismiss the principle upon any apprehension that our love will satisfy his perfection; for, in his great love for us, he would have us to shine forth in his own divine image. It is a fact, easily explained, that those who have proved the highest love of God, have also had the strongest apprehensions of falling short of salvation. The reason is, simply, because they retain a very high sensibility of conscience, from not hardening themselves by sin; and by purity of mind, they obtain such views of the holiness of God as cast their best works into so strong a light as to expose their imperfections and corruption to view, and to deprive them of all the eclat which they might derive from comparison with the works of men. The last words John Howard ever penned, were these:

"I think I never look into myself, but I find some corruption and sin in my heart. Oh, God! do thou sanctify and cleanse the thoughts of my depraved heart. Oh! that the Son of God may not have died for me in vain."

But this was in the consideration of *himself*, for he had perfect confidence in the merits and mediation of *Christ*, and left it to be inscribed on his

tomb: "In Christ is my hope." The day he died, he told Admiral Priestman, "Priestman, you style this a dull conversation, and endeavour to divert my mind from dwelling upon *death;* but I entertain very different sentiments. *Death has no terrors for me;* it is an event I always look forward to with cheerfulness, if not with pleasure; and, be assured, the subject is more grateful to me than any other." But how shall the man who has such a sense of duty as to adopt the following maxim, fail to tremble before the all-seeing God?

"Our superfluities," says Mr. Howard, "should be given up for the conveniences of others; our conveniences should give place to the necessities of others; and even our necessities give way to the extremities of the poor." Looking at ourselves, we may well be *all fear;* looking to God in Christ, we have *nothing to fear;* but that we may fail so to divest ourselves of a worldly spirit, as to be entirely surrendered to his will and pleasure. It is a safe method to dwell much upon the love God, and his great and manifold mercies, so that we may be encouraged by a strong *hope.* At the same time it is a wholesome apprehension, and one that makes us careful, often to look into our own sins and imperfections, until we are conscious that there is much reason to fear that we are too sinful, and too little sensible of the great goodness of Christ to be permitted to plead

a claim through him as a Saviour. Fear is the fruit of self-knowledge, and self-knowledge is a *divine science*, learned by studying with meekness and perseverance, under the teaching of God's word, the daily course of our own performances of duty.

> Nor let soft slumber close your eyes,
> Before you've recollected thrice,
> The train of actions through the day:
> Where have my feet chose out their way?
> What have I learn'd, where'er I've been,
> From all I've heard, from all I've seen?
> What know I more, that's worth the knowing?
> What have I done that's worth the doing?
> What have I sought that I should shun?
> What duty have I left undone?
> Or into what new follies run?
> These self-inquiries are the road
> That leads to virtue and to God.

Now no one can *faithfully* perform this duty without seeing how much they fall short of their obligations every day: consequently, they must fear that when they are weighed in God's balance, they will be found wanting. But, at the same time, when most impressed by a sense of our demerits, we most clearly perceive the infinity of that goodness and mercy which have followed us in spite of our unworthiness, all the days of our lives; and we are conscious, that if ever we are lost, or fall short of glory, honour, and immortality, it is because we will not obey the command to come to the Saviour,

and let him purify us, and make us fit for the presence of God.

Thus *fear* checks presumption, and *hope* nourishes faith, and stimulates to active efforts to please God; and the two principles work together for the perfection of the human soul.

---

## LECTURE XX.

### PRAYER.

Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.—LUKE, xviii. 1.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:

That men should pray is not contained as a *command* in the Decalogue, nor in any other law of Moses. This may surprise you, unless you consider well what prayer is. It is the natural expression of religious affections, and consequently cannot be commanded to those who have none, and need not be to those who have. It is as needless to *command* men to pray, as to command them to ask for food or drink when they are hungry or thirsty. If prayer is merely an expression of the soul's sincere desire, why urge a man to ask for what he wants. when you have placed a Being before him, as the object to whom his prayers may be freely addressed, and from whom he may be certain of meeting with perfect sympathy and the full accomplishment of his wishes. If

prayer, then, is a mere voluntary expression of our thoughts and feelings, prayer is a privilege, and not justly the ground of positive enactment. To despise and neglect such a privilege must necessarily be punished by a loss of all the blessings which are contingent upon the use of that privilege. The benevolence, then, of the Deity is expressed in affording man a code of moral instructions, by which he is made sensible of his moral wants, and the source whence he may obtain their supply; and the simple suggestion, that "men ought always to pray," is freely and frequently given in Scripture. Instead, then, of enjoining upon you to pray, I would present to you first for consideration, the duty of a preparation for prayer, which consists in a high sense of the great dignity and holiness of the Being who is to be addressed; the full perception that he has purposely made you dependent upon himself, and that there is no other way by which you can obtain the supply of your wants; and lastly, that your real wants be fully discriminated in your own mind, from those false and spurious desires which originate in the base animal propensities. If "you ask amiss," you will not *receive*. Neither can you suppose that the great and holy God will be pleased to find you neglecting the good of your immortal soul, and its grand and glorious destiny, for the sake of that perishable house of clay, in which the spiritual tenant is lodged for a few brief days. Stimulate,

then, your desires for those things which will conduce to your true good, by forcing your thoughts continually to dwell upon them, as you increase your animal wants by contemplating their attractions: and "be not hasty to utter any thing before God." When a man urgently desires any thing, he will be ready to express his wants, even to those who cannot gratify them; and how much more so to those whom he knows to be only waiting for the expression of his wishes to fulfil them. No *skepticism* could prevent him from asking from One who alone knew, and had power to relieve his necessities, that which his soul longed to obtain.

Consider, then, this wonderful state of being, with all its infinite series of co-operating contrivances, the work of one God; the same God who brought you into existence, and gifted you with the means of seeing him in his works. Consider, that he who planted the ear must hear; he that revealed himself to us as the omnipotent Creator, and made us conscious that much is wanting to the perfection of our happiness, intended thereby to lead us to apply to Him to perfect that which he had begun. We cannot doubt that such was the intention of the Creator, since such is the effect of that nature which he has given us, and those providences by which he has surrounded us.

I apprehend that a most serious injury has been done to mankind by too frequently presenting

prayer to them as a duty, rather than as a privilege; by inculcating the idea that it is a something to be done, from a sense of duty, as a good *work*, whereas prayer is simply *the natural expression of our wants and wishes;* and unless we are conscious of wants and wishes, we *cannot pray.* Instead, then, of recommending to men to pray, I would urge upon them to put themselves in a condition to pray; to qualify themselves to do so, by meditation upon their condition before God. How much they want, that he alone can give them! It is only by a knowledge of his being and attributes that they can know how to address themselves to him. And it is by a strong perception of his great wisdom, power, and goodness, that they are led to form a desire, which is certainly excited, that it may be gratified. It is a movement of the soul which he means them to follow, just as hunger is intended to lead us to seek nourishment for our bodies. And, moreover, this proves his approbation of their following this natural disposition to lay their wants and wishes before him, by making it the means of increasing their happiness and virtue, even when his wisdom denies their requests. "I would, then, that all men should pray" is the language of nature, as well as of revelation; and, in fact, savages (praying to their idols of wood and stone) are the convincing evidence of this; for the soul so much inclines to address its wants to some superior power, that it prays, even

to the works of its own hands, from the foolish ignorance of the natural mind being persuaded that Deity will delight to dwell in what is so much the object of its own admiration. If, then, all men do not pray to our holy God, it is because they *feel* no want of those things which they might ask of *him;* what they feel they want, they pray for. The proud man prays to the God of his own imagination, that his enemies may be humbled; the Christian prays to *his* God, that his sins may be forgiven. The sensual seek pleasure in the groves of Cytherea; the pure in heart *see God* as he is, and pray for his Holy Spirit to elevate their thoughts and feelings, and make themselves more like himself; nor is it difficult to perceive what prayers will ascend as grateful incense to the throne of the high and holy One who inhabits eternity. Never, then, offer to God a form of prayer, without having first realized the substance of it in your heart, whether it be supplication or praise. God, in various ways, arranges his providences so as to excite in our minds a sense of gratitude, and thus we are as naturally led to thanksgiving as we are led to supplication, by the pressure of our wants, and their subsequent gratification. Thus he works in us to will of his good pleasure, and to come before him with praise and thanksgiving, as he, by the recurrence of hunger, makes us grateful for food, and by the weariness

of the body, makes us thankful for rest. God has ordained whatever is the unavoidable effect of his providences. Adam saw, in his solitude, amid the joyous uproar of birds and beasts disporting each with their kind, that it was not good for man to be alone. It was through the voice of nature that God said it to him. And when the perception of his loneliness had become painful, then the wisely withheld blessing became a lively type to him of the parental care of his Creator, and he said, "God saw that it was *not good* for man to be alone." It is the spiritual communion with God in the sanctuary which brings our spirits to a perfect conformity with his Spirit. Consider then maturely, my dear young friends, what your real wants are, and speak nothing rashly or irreverently before your Maker, "who giveth to all life, and breath, and all things." And be assured that, if in his wisdom he sees that the granting your prayer will conduce to your true good, he will grant it; if not, he will in its stead bestow what in the end you will find to be much better. "Use no vain repetitions" in addressing him "who knows, before you ask, what things are necessary for you;" but will have you feel and think much of your spiritual, as well as your temporal wants, of your dependence upon him; and lay them all before him with reverence, and humble submission, in a perfect assurance that he "is a Hearer of prayer, and a Rewarder of those who diligently seek him."

If a preparation of the heart is necessary for prayer, we can no where obtain such aid in making this preparation, as in a deep and careful study of the Holy Scriptures; and a consideration of our troubles and necessities should lead us to use such means as it has pleased him, to whom we are to pray, to afford, of acquiring a knowledge of what will be acceptable to him in prayer. Let us then see what is said in holy writ on the duty of prayer.

*Private* prayer is enjoined there, in these words: "Enter into your closet, and pray to your Father in secret, and your Father which seeth in secret shall reward you openly."

Social prayer is also thus inculcated: "Where *two or three are agreed together* to ask any thing in my name, I will grant it."

*Public prayer* is also thus indirectly commanded: "It is written that my house *shall be called the house of prayer.*" God, then, having appointed the temple as the peculiar place of prayer, our Saviour banished all worldly concerns from it, that the command of his Father might be fulfilled, and the house once more be dedicated to prayer. In conformity to this, the Christians, at the same time that they were instructed not to confide in the office of high priest, which was at an end, since the bringing in of better things by the blood of Christ, were

told "not to neglect assembling themselves together;" and Peter and John went up into the temple *at the hour of prayer*. When the veil of the temple was rent in twain, it was that the glory might fill the whole house. In the New Testament, then, which is our peculiar institute of practical law, we have a dedicated temple, an assembling of the people, an appointed hour of prayer, which the apostles obeyed as scriptural precedent, (for direct law to pray, we have observed, there is none, although many regulations, as to the time, frequency, manner, matter, place, and, above all, the spirit of our prayers.) And now the only point to be examined is, did each one pray for himself, or were they led by one voice? St. Paul speaks of the gift of prayer, and not praying in an unknown tongue to the people; and since they were promised a blessing when two or three asked the same thing, doubtless they who were of one mind and one spirit, when they came together, united their voices in making their common request to the universal Father; but they were led by the appointed minister. We should use, then, private prayer for our individual wants; social prayer for social purposes; and public prayer, to make known to the Lord of the whole earth our national wants. We should also use prayer as the appointed means of binding society together in the ties of Christian fellowship. Those who habitually partake together of the pri-

vileges of the sanctuary cannot, if they worship in spirit and truth, fail to love each other, and to be deeply concerned for those things for which they united in prayer.

The earliest annals of history speak of acts of devotion performed by good and bad. We find, however, that such men as Moses, David, and Daniel, prayed constantly and fervently; and when men have given the evidence of wisdom which Moses gave, and of genius and eloquence such as David possessed, they may be permitted, if they are so disposed, to convince others of the inutility of prayer. When Jesus was asked by his disciples to teach them to pray, he gave them a formula, which, for conciseness and comprehensiveness, has been the admiration of those who have examined it, for more than eighteen centuries. An analysis of it affords us the amplest view of our relations to God, to ourselves, and to our fellow creatures, and yet it is so simple that an infant can be taught to comprehend it.

Bishop Wilson has mentioned as the chief use of prayer, that it changes (not God's counsels, but) us, making us more worthy subjects of his grace and mercy. Nothing can be more calculated to produce such an effect, than an examination of the high and holy import of those few simple words of the Lord's prayer. In the first words, "Our Father which art in heaven," we are taught to ad-

dress the Deity by a term which must excite the highest sense of dependence, gratitude, and reverence for him, as a Father. Secondly, they teach us not to view him as our own Father alone, but the words, "our Father," remind us that, as he is the common Parent of men, all men are brethren; and so, by a sense of our duty to him, we are forcibly reminded of our duty to each other. Thirdly, the state of heaven is here introduced to remind us that there is a state of being where our common Parent is; and to which we should all strive to be admitted, as to a home. Fourthly, we are taught to pray, "Hallowed be thy name," that is, that *all men* may have a due understanding and reverence for the holy name of our heavenly Father: that they may comprehend in it all his great and glorious attributes; and, in making this petition, we must consider well whether the honesty of our words is proved by our efforts to produce this happy state of the world. Fifthly, "Thy kingdom come" is the natural sequent of the foregoing clause. For if men would but seriously consider all that is implied by hallowing his name, that is, not to speak of it without due apprehensions of his wisdom, power, and goodness, they must come so thoroughly under his dominion, as that God's kingdom should come, or be established among men. And, sixthly, men knowing his divine perfection, and seeing the "beauty of holiness," would never be satisfied until

that state was brought about, in which God's "*will should be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" Blessed state of peace and love! If it reign for a little time, in one heart, it is a foretaste of heaven; in one family, it would be a miniature heaven on earth. If it were fulfilled in all the nations of the earth, it would be earth turned into heaven; it would be the millennial reign of Christ. But although this state of things is the constant object of our labours, and the incessant subject of our prayers, yet have we to wait patiently for its fulfilment. So far, in the spirit of universal benevolence, we are taught to pray for common blessings upon the whole human race. But now we are permitted to make our personal requests known, and how much is included (seventhly) in the few words, "Give us this day our daily bread." Old and young, rich and poor, from the monarch to the peasant, each one is dependent upon the providence of God for bread; for the sustenance of their being, both bodily and spiritual. And as we cannot take a sufficient portion of nourishment to-day, to enable us to dispense with a similar portion for to-morrow and the next day, and again the next, so we are bound to feel that our dependence upon God is from instant to instant; and what we want every day, we should ask for every day. Eighthly, what a volume of virtue and happiness might be extracted from this form of supplication, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive

those who trespass against us." As we measure unto others, shall it be measured unto us again. Oh, heavenly Father! fill then our hearts with thy perfect love, that we, showering the blessings of Christ's glorious gospel upon the whole benighted world around us, thou mayst pour out upon us the precious things of thy divine love. Let us not rest in mere passive forgiveness; let us love and do good to our worst enemies, that thou mayst love us for our resemblance to thee. Ninthly, what could follow more suitably the consideration of the duty of mercy and forgiveness, than that we should pray, "Lead us not," or "suffer us not to be led into temptation." Let no prosperity tempt us to forget ourselves, nor adversity harden our hearts, so as to weaken our trust and confidence in thee, our God; nor dry up the sources of our Christian charity and sympathy with our fellow creatures; but, tenthly, "Deliver us from evil." Let thy omnipotence control, not only outward events for our safety and happiness, but enter into our sinful minds, oh, heavenly Father! and leave us not to our depraved nature, but govern us in all things, by thy grace; so shall we be enabled to live as subjects of thy kingdom, and power, and glory.

Prayer, or the worship of God, is divided into three parts, confession, supplication, and thanksgiving or praise. Each one of them is equally obligatory with the others. It is our duty to confess

our sins to God in secret, then it is our duty to acknowledge our sins before men, as an example to them that they may confess their sins. So of supplication, it is our duty to pray both in private and in public, for those things which we are commanded to ask of God, that others may be induced to do so too. If thanksgivings are proper for one, they are so for all men; and we should let men see us perform our duties to God, that they also may glorify our Father in heaven.

—

## LECTURE XXI.

SERVING GOD WITH THE LIFE AND SUBSTANCE.—TO DEVOTE MYSELF, MY LIFE, AND ALL THAT I CALL MINE, TO HIS SERVICE.

Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit eternal life.—MATT. xix., 29.

WHAT have we that we have not received of God? Have we independent existence, or is there any other possession of which we may say, it is mine, I made it? Wealth? The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. Power? There is no power but of God, and thou couldst have none, unless it were given to thee from above. Talents? He who made thee and fashioned thee, within and without,

committed these to thy keeping. Time? Behold, yet a little while, and thou shalt not be, and thy place shall know thee no more. But when thy mortal life has gone out, and all thy earthly pursuits and pleasures have passed away and are forgotten, then shalt thou hear, in thy grave, the herald of the eternal I AM, "*who was, and is, and is to come,*" calling thee back to existence; and thou shalt stand before him and answer to these awful questions. Where is the *interest* of those talents which I committed to thee upon earth? I gave thee an improvable faculty, I bestowed upon thee a spark of my own divine fire, and intended and commanded thee to kindle a great flame with that little spark. I intended thee to become a burning and shining light, to glorify me among men, and thou wouldst not.

Look back eighteen hundred years ago, and behold, in a province of the Roman empire, by the sea-side, a young man, dressed in the garb of a peasant, walks there alone! He sees two fishermen drying their nets, and he calls to them, (and afterwards at different times to ten other obscure men,) and commands or persuades them to follow him. What is he? Where are they to follow him? What inducements does he offer them? What are their united efforts to effect? He was, we are told, a carpenter's son; he had lived heretofore with his parents, in the obscurity of the most despised district of the pro-

vince. It does not appear that he clearly communicated to his companions why they were to follow him; and the influence by which he induced them to do so, can only be explained by the unique character which is ascribed to his presence, his power, his wisdom and his goodness, in which they felt the presence of divinity. Never man acted like this man, might have been said with the same truth which forced his appalled adversaries to confess that "never man spake like this man." He came, as he declared, to set up a kingdom which should pervade the whole earth; and yet his kingdom was not of this world. He was the Prince of peace, and yet he came not to bring peace upon earth, but a sword. He came to reign, but he came to die an ignominious death. He promised his disciples thrones and kingdoms; and yet he warned them, that they should be scourged and tormented, and put to death for his name's sake; and yet not a hair of their heads should perish. They followed him, because they saw in him a tone of authority which they had never seen in the most highly gifted men; and they thought he was, (strange and paradoxical as it might seem,) the Christ, the Messiah; the long hoped for Prince, who was to restore Israel. The object to be effected by their united efforts, is to be collected from various relations which they have left in writing. It appears from these, that the first *work* they entered upon was teaching; and when they had succeeded

in collecting a sufficient audience, his first public discourse is recorded. From it we are led to perceive that his object was to make the poor contented with their destiny, and to inculcate peace and good will among men, and especially to promise with authoritative decision the highest rewards and enjoyments of heaven to the meek, *the pure in heart*, and the *peace-makers*. Having spent several years in great poverty, inculcating an unresisting submission to personal injuries, and even forbidding his followers to defend *his life* when violently assailed, we hear that he was at last crucified publicly, and it would seem *intentionally;* for the history so states that he previously instructed his followers it "must needs be." But why "must it needs be?" Because he meant those who should hereafter believe in his name to see that they must not value *their lives* in comparison with the object of promoting his kingdom upon earth. He meant to leave to his followers a command to "go unto all nations, baptizing every creature, teaching them all such things as they should do," in spite of every resistance and persecution which the wrath of man could devise. They were to persevere against kings and princes, and magistrates, scourges and tortures, and violent deaths, in doing his mandate; and he meant, after a life of superhuman wisdom, goodness and power, to *die*, and to rise again from the dead, to convince them that it was their duty to devote themselves,

all that they were, and all that they had, to the objects to which he had directed their attention. They so understood it, and, putting away from them all worldly-mindedness, they entered zealously upon their duty, and wherever they made converts, those converts thought themselves bound to enter upon the same course of life, and to give themselves, and all that they possessed, to the promotion of their Master's cause. And now, do you ask me, where was the injunction taken off? I profess to you I could never see why or when it was supposed to be remitted. I know not why we are not individually bound at this moment, if we are enjoying all the blessed influences of Christian institutions, and all its precious hopes, to do as much in the service of its Founder, as were the first disciples. That we were expected to continue the work of evangelizing the *whole world*, I conclude from the expression, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Now it is unaccountable, that Christians should have ceased to go unto all nations, and should have persuaded themselves that they were living under some new dispensation, in which they were exempted from the duty of labouring to effect the purpose for which the Saviour and the apostles shed their blood; and I believe that whoever will take up the New Testament, and study it with an anxious desire to ascertain his *whole duty*, that he may leave no part undone, will be convinced that

it is as much our duty now to propagate true religion among all the nations, as it was that of St. Paul or St. Peter. He will be convinced that God will require at our hands that we should have dispensed to the ignorant all the light which we possess; and that our money, time, influence, and every other means, should be devoted, without reserve, to promote the cause of truth. That, laying aside all worldly, sensual, selfish objects, we should dedicate ourselves to such studies and pursuits as may most effectually prepare us for usefulness. He will feel that we should joyfully consecrate ourselves, our lives, and all that we call ours, to the extension of his kingdom upon earth. This I am sure of, because the command is, "teach *every creature;*" and, consequently, until every creature has been taught, the command has not been fulfilled; and, since the apostles, by the permission of Heaven, have departed and left the work unfinished, it devolves upon their followers to complete their work. I am the more assured of this, because, first, men are as *mortal* now as formerly; secondly, they are as much sinners; thirdly, their souls are as valuable; and if our Lord shed his own blood for sinners, then surely the souls of sinners are as precious, and as worthy of the devotion of our lives *now*, as of his then; fourthly, if the life of the Lord Jesus Christ was given as a ransom for souls, certainly we should not value ourselves, our friends, our fortune, talents, or

any other gift of God, so highly as to say we are not to relinquish it for the purpose for which his life was given up. Neither can we say that the great object was effected by *his* sacrifice, and therefore *our* sacrifice is not required; for it is to be observed, that the effect of his sacrifice was limited in the first instance to saving those who were his disciples; and it was by *their* dedication of themselves, and *their* self-sacrifice, that the world was to be converted. It was when Christians began to live at ease, and relinquish that entire dedication of themselves, and all their possessions, that the progress of Christianity declined; and now that men have ceased to think it their duty to go unto all nations so soon as they unite themselves to the church of God, they will hardly cast of their abundance into the treasury enough to keep some few poor missionaries from perishing, and the progress of our blessed faith has nearly ceased. When savage nations are ready to receive Christ with open arms, and nothing is wanted but teachers, we find that faith has so declined in the church, that one generation after another of the heathen world perishes in darkness, and none are going forth with the glad tidings of the Gospel. If some, more zealous than the rest, leave home and friends for the kingdom of God's sake, deeming the eternal felicity of their fellow creatures of more worth than a few hours, days, or years of domestic ease and temporal enjoyment to themselves and their

families, even Christians often, instead of cheering them on their career of sacred self-dedication, and rejoicing that Christ has found a faithful advocate and a minister, chill, with their icy judgments, the very heart's blood of the apostolic follower of his crucified Lord.

It will be remembered that, from the commencement, I have held up Jesus Christ as the standard of moral performances, as I suppose his Gospel to be the measure of moral principles. I will therefore now forego the appeal that may perhaps be termed a reference to religious feelings, and request you to examine the precept, which I consider as the basis of all moral obligation, "Men should do unto others as they would wish others to do unto them." You are in the enjoyment of peace and security; equal rights and privileges are yours, as members of a civilized community; your government is based upon the principles of a just equality; and your institutions for learning, your public charities, and the meliorated tone of morals, manners, and customs of your country, excite your triumph, and you very truly consider your national blessings as incomparably greater than those of a vast portion of the nations of the earth. If Providence, then, has so highly favoured your country, should you not extend the blessings of civilization and Christianity to your fellow-men? Should you not endeavour to communicate to them those arts of happiness, those

morals, manners and customs which have rendered your country so prosperous? Reverse the condition of things, and consider well, if you were in the savage ignorance and corruption of the heathen nations, do you think it would be desirable that benevolent men should leave happy homes like your present, and go to your assistance, and instruct you in all that ennobles, elevates, and refines a people, and makes them happy? If you cannot but confess that you see it would be most desirable, in your own case, to obtain such aid from men, then consider it is an indisputable principle, left to your *honest* application, to "do unto all men as you would wish them to do unto you," and make haste to fulfil this acknowledged duty; for the night of death is before you, the day is short. Nor has it a certain period, like the solar day, but its termination arrives generally when we are least aware of its approach? Therefore, my young friends, be diligent, and delay not to commence a life of duty to your fellow-creatures. This is more fully prescribed to you in the general terms of this command, "do unto others as you would wish them to do unto you," than it could be by particular specifications, which could never reach, as this does, to *every possible case.* If you know that, in India, men, women and children are sacrificed to Juggernaut and the Ganges, if you know that the devil is worshipped in Africa, if you know that the Chinese carry a little misshapen stone

in their bosom, which they select and purchase in a shop, like a toy-shop, and that they pray to that stone, you know, that every effort you make to *promote* the knowledge of the *true God* is a tacit confession that you do not value your religious privileges so much as to wish to contribute, with all your might, to the dispensation of your faith to the idolatrous heathen world. May the Father of our spirits defend you from such a distinct evidence of your want of faith, love and charity. May you never be confounded in the day of judgment, by hearing Christ say, "Depart from me, ye cursed—inasmuch as ye have not *ministered* unto the least of my brethren, ye have not ministered unto *me*." Oh! beware of *selfishness; beware of a low estimate of Christian duty;* beware of the insidiousness of sins of omission, which corrode the soul like the canker-worm, and leave it utterly unfit for the glorious purposes for which God designed it.

She thus enforces the duty of meditation:

My meditation of him shall be sweet.—Ps. civ. 34.

There is nothing more certain than that abstraction of the mind from external things is necessary to the exercise of its higher powers. A child soon learns, if it has a difficult lesson to study, that it must find some quiet spot, secure from interruptions, or external things will occupy such a portion of its

attention as will prevent the success of its most strenuous efforts to learn. A lawyer who has a deeply important and intricate argument to make, before a court of justice, retires to his study, and spends hours together in collecting his facts, arranging and re-arranging his proofs, and examining the grounds of his arguments. A member of congress, who desires to offer some resolution which will be of vital importance to the community, gives his undivided attention to meditating upon every possible light in which the subject may be viewed, that he may pen it so as to conciliate enemies, as well as to secure friends to his cause; and he amends and re-amends his plans to avoid misapprehension, before he submits them to the judgment of his fellow-men. How imperiously necessary then is it, that, when we would communicate our thoughts and wishes to the most high God, we should previously meditate much upon the nature of our addresses to him. Would we confess our sins? How little do we often realize of the nature of sin in general, or our particular offences of commission or omission. But will God be satisfied with our taking a superficial view of our delinquencies, and thus making to him a confession, greatly inadequate to the actual commission of sin which he has registered against us? A friend, in whom you greatly confided, has injured you deeply, has accused you of some dishonourable act, which your soul abhors; but you love him still,

for he was the friend of your youth; and although he has so wounded your affections you would willingly open your heart to him, if he would but return, saying, "I repent." After a cruel alienation, in which you have grieved more for his fault, than for your own injury, he comes to you and commences as you naturally anticipate an acknowledgment of his offence; your disappointment is then overpowering, while he says, "My dear friend, I have come to-day to confess that I passed you yesterday very rudely, but it was quite unintentional, as I was much engaged at the moment, and did not perceive you until it was too late to speak." Now, my dear young friends, you are all conscious that such conduct would appear to you so trifling as to be highly insulting. What! you would think, you have forgotten the most serious offence against friendship and justice; and you come formally to make confession of an indifferent accident! And yet, let me assure you, such is probably your own *daily* conduct to the Creator, Benefactor, Father of your souls. You come before him to reinstate yourself in his favour, by a confession of your sins, and you have never even caused to pass in review before your own mind, what you have to confess; consequently, instead of being filled with a proper sense of penitence for having committed sins against a glorious and good Being, to whom you are responsible, and who remembers so well that which you have

lost sight of, your spirit is slightly moved, and cannot possibly obtain his forgiveness, since the carelessness with which you ask it is an additional offence. It is not thus with confession alone; but in preferring our supplication, it is absolutely essential that we should reflect deeply upon the subject of our prayers. For this purpose we should often bring before our minds the many mercies by which we are surrounded, which are absolutely necessary to our happiness, and the abstraction of one of which would make a serious inroad upon our comfort. Let us, then, meditate upon the fitness of all created things to promote our happiness, and on the misery produced by the loss of any one of a thousand blessings which we are scarcely conscious of enjoying. We are at present enduring, perhaps with much impatience, the rigors of a severe winter; but we should consider that many benefits depend upon this state of things, which are not obvious on slight observation. The moral and physical energies are greater in cold climates, and the passions consequently are kept under better restraint. Many other desirable effects are produced by cold into which we should inquire. We are surrounded, perhaps, by pecuniary difficulties; but, meditating upon the subject, we discover that from poverty we have learned humility, and a content which we knew not in our prosperity. We may be too young to have experienced in our own person the vicissitudes of life; but very

little observation and proper reflection will prove to us that, where the experience of all mankind can be ascertained, it is often diametrically opposed to the course of our anticipations; and thus meditation itself, in many ways, may convince us that we should reflect *seriously* upon every petition before we venture to make it to him who knows before we ask what things we have need of; and perhaps only requires us to ask that we may become more sensible of the many mercies we are accustomed to receive at his hands. These slight hints may suggest how we are prepared by *meditation* to make supplication to God. Would we offer *praise* or *thanksgiving*, certainly every mental faculty must be put in requisition, and stirred up to its utmost energy. Natural science should unfold its ample page to furnish us with thoughts worthy of the Author of all things. We should consider the anatomy of our own bodies, and say with David, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." We should meditate upon the still stranger mysteries of our moral being, until every power within us is called forth to offer the homage of grateful praise to him who made us in his own image, and "set his eye upon our hearts, that we might see the glory of his works." How dear to us are the hours we have it in our power to spend alone with a beloved friend! How sweet the free intercourse of affection! And where we cultivate the habit of secret communion with our heavenly

Father, it is as much more exquisite in its enjoyment, as he is more capable of loving our souls, and knowing how to communicate pleasure to them. Did your soul ever swell with sympathy as you heard a noble sentiment expressed? Did tears of rapture ever burst unbidden from your eyes, as you listened to the history of a generous deed? How then do you feel while the God of nature unfolds to your meditative spirit the deep-laid plan of moral probation, by which his fallen creatures have been led through all the devious paths of sin and sorrow, while their "sins were made to rebuke them, and their iniquities to correct them," until a spirit was prepared within them to receive the Messiah appointed before the foundations of the world were laid. Have you contemplated the history of man's first disobedience, and God's long-suffering and great kindness, until the words have burst spontaneously from your lips, "Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Meditation alone gives us just comparative views of the relative importance of temporal and eternal things. To the little, busy, bustling essence, a worldly mind, whose restlessness brings it in contact at every instant with a new object of interest, a moment is its eternity; and therefore it is, we have that wonderful paradox, so constantly exhibited, a being, intended for glory, honour, and immor-

tality in eternal life, living for the perishing pursuits of mortality. But the mind which delights in a continued series of thoughts, soon learns to connect its being with a future state, and to estimate the superior importance of those things which last for ever, to those which shed their ephemeral glories in the passing sun-beams that gave them birth. To the worldly mind, the stars are "little patines of bright gold." To the contemplative mind, they are animated globes, evincing by their forms, their movements, their distances, their satellites and luminous atmospheres, that the Omniscient and Omnipotent, who made our earth, brought forth the host of them together, and provided for them a beautiful equipoise of good. Devotion to the insignificant succession of those trifles, in which the life of the worldling is for ever spent, makes *that* next to nothing, to nonentity, a nameless trifle. Meditation alone can produce a Newton; and how much more worthy of the God of nature the admiration which a Newton could offer, when deep and careful *meditation* on those phenomena, which pass unheeded in the trifler's sight, had opened to his cleared vision the long-hidden mysteries of nature's laws. When at once he beheld the glorious orb of day swung central in the immensity of space, and measured the harmonious movements and circling orbits of those whirling balls, all, perhaps, like our own, redolent of life and bliss, what must have been the

emotion which agitated so vast a mind, when such a perception burst fully upon it! How acceptable to the Author of creation the reflection of his own glory, thus cast back to him from his creature's mind. I can imagine that every energy of the soul might be thus suspended by wonder and delight; and that the vast tumult of such great emotions might find no utterance. But God sees and delights in beholding the glorious ecstasy of god-like minds.

The people of Syracuse thought Archimedes a madman, when he sprung undressed from his bath, and ran out into the street, crying aloud, "I have found it, I have found it!" And, perhaps, when he explained to them that it was not a purse of gold or a diamond ring which he had recovered, but an abstract truth that he had found, they felt still more convinced he had lost his senses. But it was the gratification of intense desire of knowledge, produced by the mind's having long revolved anxiously the subject, which caused him such ecstasy. In this is shown the importance of meditative habits. They increase and strengthen the desires; and a proper *use* or an *abuse* of meditation is indeed the foundation of vice or virtue, wisdom or folly. Did strong passions spring suddenly into existence and maturity, they would be comparatively blameless; but the strength they manifest in action is to men the evidence of their habitual and undue indulgence. It is graceful, useful and pious to weep for the loss of

a friend; but the mind which continues absorbed in the contemplation of a sorrow loses the elasticity of the animal spirits, and sinks into a hopeless dejection. The long-continued entertainment of any emotion of anger or resentment gives it a strength, which makes it, at last, the despotic tyrant of the mind. This only proves that long-continued and connected action of thought determines the character. If you would be wise, think frequently and uninterruptedly upon subjects of improving knowledge; if you would be virtuous, give yourself to meditating upon the means of being useful to mankind: if you would be holy and heavenly-minded, resign yourself often to solitary musing:

> "And hold high converse with the viewless
> Spirits that walk throughout creation's wonders,
> Hymning their Maker's praise, till sun and moon,
> And all the lesser glories of the sky, on your rapt
> Ear, in spiritual song, pour their united
> Glorious anthems, through the vast, deep
> Vaulted aisles of meditation's silent fanes,
> Where God is present, and the world shut out."

Thus it was she endeavoured to develop the moral faculties, and cultivate the spiritual affections of her pupils, teaching them that their present happiness and their future bliss are inseparably bound together, both alike springing from the common fount of that Spirit which, as a well of water, springs up to eternal life in the bosom of the faithful child of God.

Delicate health had, as we before remarked, been the allotment of Miss Mercer, from a very early period of her life; but some years before it became the means of liberating her struggling spirit from the bondage of the flesh, the symptoms of consumption of the lungs became too plainly manifest to permit any hesitation in the minds of her friends that her course was rapidly drawing to a close. What her own opinions were on the subject, no one knew, as she did not make it a theme for conversation. The spirituality of her soul was ever manifestly on the increase, and though bound down to the earth by the necessities of the circumstances in which she was placed, she was ever like one struggling to get free, having her conversation in heaven. Her letters were generally short, and occupied with the needful details of the business concerns of her school and other affairs. Yet even on such subjects they bore the impress of the mint in which they were coined, and carried with them the evidence that they were the production of a mind fixed on heavenly things. Her anxiety for the welfare of the children committed to her care knew no diminution. Nightly visits to their chambers while they slept; fires kindled with her own hands when too feeble to leave her own room with propriety; letters to their parents giving information of the most minute particulars regarding their health, and comfort, and progress,—all spoke in the unmistakeable language of sincerity, of her

unceasing care for them. She had always felt the responsibility of thus assuming a parent's place, and familiarity with its duties had not diminished her estimate of it; and even after her pupils had passed from under her control, she continued to sympathize with their sorrows and griefs, and to enter into their joys. She was ever rejoiced at receiving letters from them, and the following extracts from her replies to some will exhibit the principles with which she endeavoured to prepare them to meet the temptations, or endure the trials of life, as their path led them through one or the other. Nor must it be forgotten that what she inculcated on her pupils, whether present or absent from her, she practised herself. Her sun was approaching its decline, and shone pure and bright,

> "Soft as that hallowed light that burst from heaven,
> When angel minstrels to the shepherds sung."

One in daily intercourse with her, remarks: "She seemed already in spirit an inhabitant of that heaven toward which she was hastening."

A pupil to whom she was much attached, and whose course she watched with affectionate solicitude, wrote to solicit her advice on the subject of worldly conformity; to whom she returned the following reply:—

"I hope, my dear Mary, you have thought of all the various sources of anxiety which occupy me at

this season, and attributed to the only true cause, my apparent neglect of your sweet letters.

"Never doubt, my dear child, that my heart is deeply interested in your welfare, and that my advice shall never be withheld when it can guard you from danger, or incite you to what is good.

"The subject upon which you ask my opinion, is one which has been often and much discussed, and many ingenious things have been said upon the popular side, calculated to bewilder the conscience of a young casuist; but, my dear, I believe every thing may be answered which can be urged upon that side.

"If *all were true Christians*, would there be any full-dressed balls—any Parisian fashions? Would the extremes of poverty and suffering, of splendour and luxury be found in the adjoining houses? And would women, stifling all kind and generous sympathies, pass by the door of indigence and sorrow to revel in thoughtless vanity, in the dwellings of selfish sensuality?—I think we may answer,—certainly *not*. If all were real Christians, we should love our neighbours as ourselves. The poor Samaritan would be owned as our neighbour, and to pour oil and balm into the wounds of the suffering would be as much the pleasure of every Christian as it was that of their Lord and Master. Now, if all this is true,—and who can deny it?—then all the world are wrong in the direction of their tastes—wrong in the appropriation of their time, and wealth, and

whatsoever other talents the Lord has committed to them; and the best service that can be done them, is to prove practically (so that they cannot deny it) that the follower of the Lord Jesus has a *pleasure* in serving the Lord, in labouring for the improvement of the ignorant and the relief of the indigent, that the worldly-minded cannot have in all his selfish pursuits. Live so as to prove this, my own dear Mary, and you will do more for the peace and comfort of those around you, as well as for the future happiness of your own soul, than in any conformity to what you do not approve.

"Be cautious in condemning others, except by the tenor of your own life; but never give in to what your heart condemns from a weak fear of giving offence. I have for a considerable portion of my own life been contending with these sophistical suggestions of the enemy of souls; but "resist the devil, and he will flee from you." When he sees you are bent upon serving God, all he can do is to persuade you that you are wrong in your ideas of religion and holiness, and that you must serve the Lord without appearing different from his liege subjects. Now this is a trick of the old Adam, and without affecting any thing, just follow that which is right; spend the short span of your life in doing all the good you can, and let the appearances follow in regular sequence from the nature of things. It is natural to look for figs on a fig-tree. It is

nothing but natural to perceive good works abounding where persons are under the influence of the Holy Spirit. There can be no pride, arrogance, vanity, pharisaical boasting, or despising others, but modest and humble zeal to do all one's duty, and when it is done, to say we are *unprofitable servants;* to *rejoice* in the Lord continually, because of his infinite mercy to sinners; to condemn no one, because we know we deserve to be condemned ourselves. These are the signs of being in Christ."

And again she writes to the same.

My dearest Mary:

I hope you have not thought it hard, that I should be so long in answering your letter—most welcome letter. The truth is, I returned to such a state of confusion here, and had such difficulty in getting ready for the reception of the girls, that I could not spare one hour. Even when the 1st of October came, I was far from being ready, and this is the first day I could spare an hour; yet, do not believe, my sweet and very dear child, that I did not thank our heavenly Father for the blessing which he has shed on you. Oh! may its healing influence be daily stronger and stronger, until your whole being shall partake of the Divine nature.

Allow nothing—nothing—neither reproach nor ridicule, neither the allurements of society nor the example of others, to draw you off, and "separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus

our Lord." And above all things, my dear, honour your profession by a consistent walk. Study, with a serious apprehension of the awful holiness of the great Jehovah, to do nothing in your Christian character unadvisedly, but remember that Christ is judged by a thoughtless world, from the walk and conversation of his people. It is *not your own character which is at stake, but it is the character of your Master;* therefore be wise as a serpent, while you are harmless as a dove. "Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think of these things." Be a thousand times more diligent than before in the performance of all your duties, and do all with a cheerful spirit. Make religion lovely and attractive to all who witness its power in you; and pray every day that the Lord would give you grace to honour him, and so to set forth his praise by your actions, that men may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

I find, with some persons, our recent interest in the subject of religion is not very popular. That, and my being so long away, without getting my circular published, has thrown me behindhand. I shall begin with forty-six scholars, not counting Grace and Jane, although, to secure my full number, I engaged several more than fifty; I did intend to confine myself to forty, but the arrangements of this

year have been so expensive that I ought to have my full number to meet all my payments.

You cannot think how beautifully every thing is arranged. The dressing-room is the most complete establishment; I have the most perfect pump, which draws the water from the bottom of the well into the dressing-room; then a large boiler with a flue, which passes entirely round the room, and will keep it perfectly warm at all hours; a large reservoir for warm water, and a spacious bath; the compartments are furnished each with a cup and basin, and there can hardly be any thing sweeter or more convenient. Then there is a dry walk for the morning; but I cannot tell you half I have done since you were here. I wish you would come over and see every thing, and tell me, my dear, all your recent experience.

Farewell, my dear child; hold fast to the anchor of your hopes, and may the Giver of all grace make you truly and wholly his own, is the prayer of,

Your tenderly attached friend,

M. Mercer.

I wish you and Rosina would take advantage of this occasion to come over; I have so few with me that I should enjoy your visit of all things. Give my most affectionate remembrances to your papa, mamma, and your sisters.

To one suffering under bodily disease, she thus writes:

"Your letter, my very dear young friend, which I received by the last mail but one, found me in the midst of the bustle of dismissing my school for vacation; and I postponed answering it until I could command an hour of quiet. Yesterday Miss C——, Miss I——, and the last but one of the girls who are to go, left us; and this morning I have seated myself to express to you my sincere grief in your suffering, and at the same time the consolation I derive from hearing from your dear aunt how patient the grace of God has made you under such accumulated trials. Praised be his holy name, that in the midst of his chastenings he has poured out his precious consolations upon you, and enabled you to kiss the rod. Yours, dearest Mary, are afflictions less severe than those of Job; but oh! how far more powerful the means provided to sustain your faith than those which kept that of the suffering patriarch from fainting. From the depths of his grief, he cried out, 'Oh! that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me.' But you, my dear child, God has remembered in his mercy in the fulness of time, and the set time of your salvation *has come.* Oh! what a difference! Job saw as through a glass, darkly, and he exclaimed, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth;' but your Redeemer has been fully revealed; He has stood upon the earth, He has finished the work of your salvation, and now He is

with you always as the Comforter whose strength is sufficient for all your need. I should be very thankful if I could see you, and talk with you of the mercies of God in Christ; but, if we must not in the flesh, in the spirit we are permitted to commune, and this is far beyond any earthly blessing. You will hear with pleasure, I am sure, that six of our little flock last Sunday united themselves with the Saviour in the communion of his body and blood. God grant them grace to be faithful. Every one here, my dear child, feels the deepest sympathy in your sufferings, and all unite in praying to God (if it seems good in his eyes,) to raise you up to health and usefulness; if not, that he would himself be with you in all your trials, smooth the bed of sickness, strengthen the fainting spirit, confirm your faith, brighten your hopes, give you clearer views of eternal peace and joy in heaven, and never leave you until he places you with him who purchased you with the precious price of his own blood, that you might be like him, and be with him for evermore, at the right hand of the throne of glory. Amen, so be it. With sincerest affection, I am,

"Dear ——, your friend in Christ,

"M. Mercer."

And again, after the lapse of a year:

"I am afraid, my dear ——, you have thought we were all too busy at Belmont to remember our ab-

sent friends; but indeed it has not been so, and often in our conversations we speak of you, and when our united prayers are addressed to God for his blessing and consolation for those who are suffering in mind or body, we especially pray for a blessing upon you. Dear child, what an alleviation of affliction it is to remember that those whom God loves he purifies in the fire; and how sweet to *lie passive in the arms of redeeming love*, and acknowledge that we have no need of any *work* of our own to please the Father, because he loves us for the blessed Saviour's sake; and that the more we feel our unworthiness, the more we are enabled to appreciate the Lamb who was slain for us, and made a full and sufficient sacrifice and oblation for all our sins. I should have written to you before, dear ——, but my school opened this session with a much larger number of scholars; and many new ones demand much increased care in every way; it is almost like opening a new school, and for the last four or five weeks we have had the prevailing influenza among us. To-day school opened after Christmas holidays, and at this moment the pupils are in the school-room, with Miss Condy in the desk, in study-hour; and I have seated myself to write you a few lines of affectionate remembrance, and to beg to hear from you how you are, and whether you are enabled to glorify your heavenly Father by a patient waiting on Him in the weariness of a sick room. I have just received from

New York a present of a little book, which I should greatly love to send you. It is the 'Memoir of an Only Daughter,' who, during a long, painful illness, gave such precious evidences of willingness to suffer her heavenly Father's will, that it was the greatest consolation to her parents. I do not think we ever estimate the infinite goodness of God until we have *felt* that it is good for us that we have been afflicted. So long as the fleeting world and its perishable pursuits keep our hopes of worldly happiness and distinction alive, ambition and the love of pleasure continue to disquiet us; but when long sickness has taught us by sad experience how little earthly things are to be trusted to, we perceive the superior excellence of those objects of desire and hope which are at God's right hand for evermore. The dear girls here afford me but too many affecting proofs of this. They are so young, so full of natural sympathy with the world and worldly things, that they continually fall back in the walk of faith. At this season of the year, however, I seldom see much attention to religion, and must continue, in implicit confidence that the seed of the word will bring forth its appointed fruit, to labour and wait patiently on the Lord. Dear Mr. Adie comes to us very constantly, and does all that he can for us. —— is not with us this winter, but will return in the spring. We all love you, dear Mary, and poor —— often comes to me to ask if I have heard lately from you. Girls,

teachers, servants, all desire to hear good news from you. Will you write and tell us how you are, and if you are not well enough, give my love to your kind aunt, and ask her, please to write for you, and do not omit to say how your mamma is; and be assured that I take the deepest interest, not only in your spiritual and eternal welfare: but that it may please our heavenly Father to strew your path through this vale of tears with every comfort and pleasure which is consistent with your eternal felicity, is the sincere and devout prayer of

"Your affectionate friend,

"M. MERCER."

"The girls would write, or send messages, but are all in school."

To one of her pupils, suffering from bereavement:

"I have been thinking of you, my dear ——, with much affection and sympathy ever since you left us, but you know how impossible it is for me to command a quiet hour to devote to a friend, and I knew that your time was most usefully employed. I could not wish you to be in a school where you would learn more important lessons. May God bless them, dearest ——, not only to your everlasting good, but to your temporal peace and happiness. Nothing, my child, is more manifest to the Christian, than that such afflictions and bereavements as

our heavenly Father inflicts upon us are necessary to wean our thoughts and affections from worldly things. The things which perish, we must learn to give up cheerfully; the friends that are taken away, and leave us here, we must learn to consider as gone before us, and resign them to our universal Parent. Thus, when we are taught of God to acquiesce in *His* best, wisest, will, all contention of our rebellious wills subsides, and peace settles like a dove upon the soul: this is that 'peace of God which *passeth all understanding*.' Soon may you see its powerful consolation poured out upon ——, in whose griefs I have deeply sympathized, although I felt that as there is a joy, so there is a sorrow in which the stranger meddleth not, and I have blessed God, that he who saith, 'Lo, I am with you always,' has promised himself to be our Comforter; that He is at hand, ever in the hearts of those whose bruised and broken spirits are looking to Him for consolation.

"I heard, dear ——, soon after you went down, that you were to be confirmed, and I have been wishing much to hear that you had thus entered upon the covenanted privileges of the external church. I am sure you will be very much strengthened by feeling that you obeyed the command of our Lord, and, by your own voluntary act, confessed Him before men, knowing that He has pledged himself, if you do, to confess you before the angels. Let me advise you, dear child, if you have joined the

visible church, to have much in mind that the church upon earth is visible by the spiritual light which shines through our actions, making it evident that Christ dwells in us, the hope of glory. Let it be seen that a higher and more elevated view of the privileges, responsibilities, and pleasures of human life, prove you to be a co-heir with Christ in eternal glory. Does it not seem to you a mystery too wonderful to believe, and will you not resolve, in gratitude for his wonderful love, to love him *supremely*, considering the honour of his name, and the advancement of his kingdom upon earth, as the object best worth living for? Will you not devote yourself, all that you have, all that you are, to His service? knowing that this is the condition of the covenant of eternal life."

Miss Mercer had devoted herself to the examination of the nature of the Sacraments, and a careful investigation of the position they should occupy in the estimation of the faithful believer in Jesus. Among her papers, there is a long list of references to passages of the word of God, establishing their authority, and throwing light upon the purpose of their institution and the character of their influence on the soul; which was evidently designed to furnish the notes on which she founded her instructions to her pupils. As it would be impossible to clothe the skeleton with the connecting points and arguments by which

its positions are sustained, there could be no interest in it to the reader not accustomed to follow her modes of thinking and illustrations.

The following extracts from letters to two of her pupils, written in September, 1843, will better exhibit her views on the subject of the Lord's Supper.

"I fear my dear little god-daughter has thought me very remiss in not writing before, but my time has been filled with such a variety of occupations, and I have been flying about at such a rate, that I have not really had leisure for letter writing, and you know, dear Nannie, you challenge me to a discussion which might have involved me in trouble, in these disturbed times, when you asked me what I thought of Dr. Pusey's sermon? It would have taken no time, dearest Nannie, to tell you that I really thought nothing of it;—but as many persons disagree with me, I should think myself bound by the apostolic injunction to "Be ready to give a reason of the hope that is in me." I tell you, then, since you are inquiring upon this subject, that if I understand Doctor Pusey and his followers who are now producing such a sensation in the world, they are contending *insidiously* for an exclusive authority in the Priesthood, to extend according to their own pleasure the bread of life, and to deny it to whom they will, by establishing the doctrine that the Eucharist involves a miracle by which the communicant actually eats

the flesh and drinks the blood of the Son of God which was shed upon the cross. Now this I hold to be not only contrary to Revelation, but contrary to possibility: were I to enter upon my reasons for so thinking, I should transcend greatly the limits of a letter, but I mean to make the Eucharist the subject of one of our sweet Bible lessons when school meets. The Bible, after all, is its own best interpreter."

A former pupil, at the time of writing an assistant in her school, had apologized for not returning at the time of opening, by expressing her wish to remain in Baltimore for the purpose of participating in this ordinance. Miss M. replies,

My dear God-daughter:

I thank you for your sweet letter, and cannot but rejoice that you have such a motive for wishing to remain in Baltimore. May God bless the precious ordinance to the purifying and strengthening of your soul. May you be enabled to discern the Lord's body in His holy sacraments, not according to the *unprofitable* sense which He himself condemns, but as having an earnest realizing perception, discrimination, and consideration of the real agony and passion of His crucified body, by which He redeemed you from the sentence which had gone out from the infinite justice of a Holy God

against all transgression of His law. Surely they who made themselves drunk, committing excesses at the Lord's table, had no such spiritual discernment or perception that Christ had actually suffered in the body for them.

Thus it is, dear H——, that Christians feed on Christ's body by faith with thanksgiving. Our souls, born of the Spirit of God, are nourished unto eternal life by the worthiness of the sacrifice and atonement made in His flesh; and if we do not discern this fact in the communion of the Eucharist, we profane its sanctity, by taking away its affecting signification. I have not a moment more than to add that Miss —— is coming home again, and we shall have a sweet domicile. Ever with prayer to our Heavenly Father, that He may have you in his holy keeping, your affectionate friend,

M. Mercer.

To the same lady, at another time, she thus writes on a scrap of paper:

——•—— has given me this *little* sheet to write you a few words of kindness, my own dear God-child, which I hope will set your pen to running. I long to receive the assurance of your unabated enjoyment of the "love of God," which He has so graciously poured out upon you.

This morning at prayers I thought I felt a more distinct and *realizing* sense of the preciousness of

Christ's plan of atonement by uniting in Himself the majesty and glory of the Godhead with the humility of the man, than I ever felt before, and I thought, "Never man spake like this man." I wondered at the "beauty of holiness," the splendour of Divinity softened down to our feeble vision by the veil of humanity, by the sympathies, the sorrows, the deep tenderness of our nature, . . . . Dear, dear H., ever yours in the sacred bonds of Christian love, M. MERCER.

The following extracts are from letters written to a favourite pupil, who had engaged in the same path of duty as that so faithfully trod by Miss Mercer; one, of whom she always spoke with the warmest affection, and in whose welfare she was especially interested.

MY DEAR ——:

My confidence in the generous affection which you have always shown me makes me trust, that, badly as I have treated your many kind letters, you will still be glad to receive this; indeed, my dear ——, if you examine this handwriting, you will find that I am really losing the use of my pen. I have, in truth, all this spring and summer, been almost incapable of writing; for my mind has been disabled by rheumatism in my head, and my hands have been rigid with the weakness of my muscles,

until I can scarcely write legibly; the lines go jerking here and there as if I had St. Vitus's dance. Notwithstanding, I am better since I take constant exercise in the open air; and if you do not make your appearance here very soon with the children, you will see me at West River before you get here.

I am so much occupied now with closing the school, that I can attend to little else: accounts to settle, certificates to make out, examinations to close. It is a busy and a very painful scene,—so many interesting young persons dispersing never to meet again. The —— seem greatly distressed. —— is very anxious to remain; indeed, there are many of the girls who would be greatly improved by returning, and I mourn to think how they are launching out into the world, anticipating nothing but pleasure, and destined to meet with disappointment and griefs at every step. Several things have lately occurred to make me feel the importance of early education, so much, that I would not give up keeping school, for the world. Dear ——, it is a great Christian privilege to form the principles of little children. Never relax your energies, but be sure "your labours are not in vain in the Lord." I have this morning read a report of the condition of the children of the colliers in England, that has set in energetic motion every drop of blood in my heart. Oliver Twist and Squeers' school, the small servant, and Bulwer's factory children, are all feli-

citous pictures of infantine happiness compared with these little victims. Teach as long as you can, dear ——, and thank God for giving you the noblest employment on earth, and some of these days our heavenly Father may enable you and me to set up a Charity School on a noble plan."

Thus highly did she estimate, as a privilege, what inferior minds regard as servile duty; and thus, though worn out by labour and disease, did her ardent love to her Redeemer, and anxious interest in the lambs of his flock, induce her to anticipate, as her greatest blessing upon earth, the opportunity for more extended labour in his cause.

After the lapse of a year she again writes to the same young friend, to whom she had confided the education of a family especially dear to her.

"I am grieved, indeed, my own dear little ——, to hear from ——, that you were not well, and that your health and your blessed spirit were suffering together, and, I assure you, I have thought of you constantly since. There are many mysteries in the ways of God to man, but none that produces more awe in my mind than the dependence of mind and body upon each other. How severe are often the afflictions inflicted upon the one by the evils which befall the other! and yet again, we sometimes see the body perish in agonies, and the soul renewed day by day, until the mortal falls off without a struggle,

and leaves the soul in glory; while yet again, another soul seems to consume away, until the man appears to walk the earth, in health and full enjoyment of earth and earthly things, without a living soul, more than the beasts that perish. May we die the death of the righteous, and our last end be like his; and for this end, as well as that we may enter into the joys of our Lord, where Christ sits at the right hand of God, let us, dearest ——, renew continually our covenant with God, and count all things as less than nothing, which have no bearing upon our spiritual good. I read yesterday some reflections upon the importance of exercising personal influence. Baxter's 'Saint's Rest' converted Doddridge, Doddridge wrote the 'Rise and Progress,' this converted Wilberforce, Wilberforce's 'Practical View' converted Legh Richmond. Now, consider the blessing conferred upon the earth by the influence of all these great men and their works, and think how little the instrument of God, who planted and watered the seed to which God gave such increase, in the heart of that poor little sickly child, Richard Baxter, knew of what she was doing. Take courage, dearest ——. The smallest things are most apt to be magnified by God to his own glory; and if you labour and pray in faith for these children that He has given you, who knows but you may live to see —— a preacher of the glorious Gospel, perhaps a successful missionary, and those precious

little girls ——! You and I have no right to doubt but that we ourselves are of that holy priesthood, that peculiar people, whom God has made and not man, who are heirs of salvation; and so may —— and —— be. Do not doubt it. You have three very promising and interesting beings committed to your teaching, and be satisfied.

"But now, dearest ——, I am anxious to know if there is any serious indisposition of body; if so, try change of air. Come up to me. I love you, my dear child, as one of my own family, and since I hear you are not well, I am anxious to see you..... Courage, my own dear child! remember you are an elect angel, and wait with patience your appointed time. Write to me, and be sure to tell me how you are, and every thing you are thinking about. Yours, with supplication, to the Author and Giver of all good, for your temporal and eternal happiness."

TO MISS ——.

"October 3.

"Thank you, my dearest ——, for your kind letter. Why talk to me of *flattering* you? Dear ——, let not so odious a word be ever named between us. May the blessing of language be taken from me if ever I knowingly flatter, or fail to be candid with you. I long to hear from you. I desire, above all things, to *feel* that you have written to me *impulsively*, because I value your soul's immortal good, and I would like to know that your *heart* was set

upon heavenly things, that you were bent upon making your calling and election sure, that your eye was ever upon the mark for the prize of your high calling in Christ Jesus, and that, with a jealous anxiety, you were labouring to secure the spotless robe of Christ's righteousness. 'Keep yourself unspotted from the world!' I have watched over you for one year with a Christian mother's heart, and none but a mother could appreciate the deep interest I feel in your welfare.

"October 10th.

"Since the first date, dearest ——, this page has been lying waiting for me to have time to continue it, and, at this distance of time, I have to send it. . . . . I have really not had an hour since, free from important engagements, and I must send the fragment to show you that it is not because I do not love you, and think of you, that I do not write. Believe, dear ——, under all circumstances, that I love you dearly, and pray for the choicest blessings of God for you. Write to me when you can. Love me, and be sure to meet me in heaven. If we both strive lawfully, we shall have sweet and holy communion in the mansions that our blessed Saviour will inhabit with us. Remember me affectionately to your household. A common interest binds me to them all, and you are that bond of union. Take the pin I gave you to the jeweller's,

and have engraved on the back, '*Love not the world,*' and keep it as a memento.

"Farewell. I am ever the same, and thank God daily that he sent you to Belmont."

The latest effort of Miss Mercer's pen was the letter to Miss Coxe, which has been given, as sent to her, on a previous page. A rough draft, (the only rough draft of her letters known to exist, she ever wrote, as she spoke, with perfect readiness and great precision, and sent her letters as the first impress of her mind,) contains the following additional paragraphs, which her modest feeling caused her to suppress, but which may well be introduced as the conclusion of her character.

"I hold evening prayers, and have for twenty years been in the habit of reading a chapter and selecting from it some striking practical text to enforce by such appeals as I am able to make to their hearts and consciences. In the commencement of the session I seldom see any marked interest in the subject, but after a winter spent in regular exercises, a sermon, or any unexpected circumstance, as the reading aloud of a fine tract, such as Little Jane, or the Dairyman's Daughter, seems to fall like a spark among combustibles; the heat is communicated by sympathy, as electrically, and soon the whole school is in a state of irrepressible feeling; for observe, however I labour to *excite* feeling where there is *none*, I exert myself to the utmost to check

the fervour of this feeling, so as to *put out* the *animal* heat, which may have been generated in the deep fermentation. I endeavour to test the reality of the impression which has been made, and I have never found but that *real feeling became stronger by such opposition.*

"I am growing so old that nothing affords me more grateful emotion than to find such zeal and abilities as you appear to possess, employed in the service of God in a field of labour so capable of rendering an abundant return, and in which I have found so few engage in a right spirit. May such a missionary be raised up to take the place which I must soon vacate.

"I look around in vain for a brave, and noble, and fearless, and daring faith, which

> "'Holds no parley with unmanly fears,
> Where duty points, still confidently steers;
> Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
> And trusting in her God surmounts them all.'

"I have first-rate teachers, but they are modest, and have not that confident zeal which arrests the feelings of the young and holds them bound. It is certainly a peculiar talent which God commits to some, and which even superior minds do not always possess, that of speaking *freely* to the young. I *nothing extenuate,* but I generally make them admit that I set down naught in malice, and under this

impression nothing offends them. But I am afraid of egotism; for, after all, I have nothing to add to my first confession, that "*God has blessed me.*" May He bless you, dear madam, is the sincere prayer of your friend in Christ, M. MERCER.

We are now approaching the period at which this sanctified servant of the Lord was to change her state of existence; to pass from the sphere of our vision, which she had gladdened with the rays of light reflected upon us from the face of that Saviour whom she so loved and served.

The approach of this period was manifested to all but herself, as much by the softened yet increased radiance she shed around her, as by the failure of the frail yet beauteous tenement, in which the spirit was enshrined. It was not only that the "battered and decaying cottage of the soul let in new light" through the rending walls which foretokened its taking down, but the same enlarging rents gave exit also to brighter rays. The approaching marriage of a niece, over whose development of character and growth to womanhood she had watched with an interest almost, if not quite, maternal, called forth anxious efforts to promote her happiness and that of her family, in addition to the usual exertions of her school. While she herself appeared not to realize her position, at least took no direct notice of it, to those around her all her goings out and in among

those to whose comfort and blessing she had so long ministered, partook of a hallowed influence, such as is communicated to the heart by that touching language of the apostle at Miletus, "Behold, now I know that all you who have seen my going out and coming in among you shall see my face no more." At the time of the marriage festivities, she left Belmont for Cedar Park, and there entered, with all the animation and zest of affectionate interest, into the happiness of that occasion. She now, as always, took pleasure in witnessing and promoting the happiness of others, and mingled freely and with cheerful sympathy in the large and loving circle of relatives and friends there assembled. But as they gazed upon her, it was to feel toward her as toward a higher and holier intelligence; "Velut, inter stellas luna minores." It was during the time now spent at Cedar Park that the author was favoured with his last intercourse with her. There was one evening especially impressed upon him. Feeling conscious that the frailty of her body needed rest, she forsook for a few hours the house of feasting, and spent them with himself and family in quiet intercourse. The place was endeared to her by early associations. It had been the residence of one of whom she spoke frequently after the death of her own mother, as occupying a place in her heart second to that only which none but a mother can fill —a house to which from her earliest years she had

been accustomed to resort with all the freedom of affectionate interest in its occupants; and where, moreover, she had put forth frequent and strenuous efforts to bind up the broken-hearted, and minister not only the comfort of sympathy, but spiritual instruction and consolation to those who mourned under severe afflictions; and she came to transfer the same feelings to those by whom it was now occupied, who had ever looked up to her with reverent affection. To describe the circumstances or detail the conversation which passed, were impossible. In the souls of those of kindred feelings it may be that a mere allusion to them will awaken the vibrations of kindred chords, and thus enable them to form a conception of their character. It was one of those occasions, "privileged beyond the common walk of life." She looked around upon the beauties of nature, and upward to the starry heavens, and in each found a theme. But for every theme she had a higher inspiration, and dwelt upon the beauties of earth, and the glories of heaven, till it appeared as though she were some strong spiritual intelligence, bearing us upward in her own heavenward flight toward the very footstool of the throne of the Majesty on high; and as the language of love fell from her lips,

> "Celestial odours filled the circuit wide,
> And told us whence her treasures were supplied."

Yet while her spiritual and intellectual powers

were thus vigorous, so feeble was her bodily frame, that it was not without painful apprehension we watched the indescribable brightness of her eye, and listened to the rich melody of her voice; and when at a late hour she parted from us, it was with the full conviction that we should meet no more unless to partake together of kindred and yet purer joys, in the courts of that mansion toward which she had been the instrument of thus drawing our souls.

Before returning to Belmont, it had been her intention to make an excursion to the North, in hope of invigorating her frame for the renewal of those duties to which she had been so long devoted, and in the discharge of which she had determined to spend her strength to the very last. But the account reached her of the sickness of a friend in Virginia, whom she loved most tenderly, and contrary to the judgment and wishes of those friends about her, she determined to abandon the excursion for her own benefit, and hasten to the comfort of the sick.

Upon her return from this visit a circumstance occurred which exhibits at once the decided character of her mind, and the influence which a feeble instrument may produce when dedicated to the service of God, and accompanied in its actings by the power of his Spirit. It was necessary for her to take the steamboat from Norfolk to Baltimore, and she planned her journey so that she should embark

upon it on the Saturday afternoon, and reach Baltimore at a very early hour on the next morning. Driving into town without inquiry, she was put upon the boat just as it left the wharf. It would be impossible for any one not familiar with her character to judge of her dismay, when, too late to recede, she discovered that the boat was not to make its usual trip, but conveyed a party of pleasure with a band of music and preparations for spending the sacred day in dancing and merriment upon the water. At the breakfast table, Miss Mercer made some remarks, the tenor of which is unknown, but the effect was such that this purpose was laid aside, at least so far as the noisy revelry was concerned. Thus was her unflinching discharge of duty instrumental in promoting her own comfort, and we may well indulge the hope that its ultimate effect upon the souls of some may be found to glory and honour in the day of the appearing of that Lord whom she loved and glorified.

She reached Belmont in a state of great exhaustion of body, and appears to have entertained seriously an intention to abandon her more extended engagements, and devote herself to the instruction of a limited number of pupils. She felt that the care of her large establishment was too much for her enfeebled physical powers, and yet the energy of the intellect and the warmth of the spirit were unquenched, and the same singleness of purpose and

determination of mind which enabled her to enter upon the path of duty when few would have failed to find sufficient reason for self-indulgence in her feeble health, still urged her to persevere until she should fall, worn out in the service of her Master.

Of this determination she spake little, or not at all, to her friends and associates. It is chiefly inferred from the fact of her having at this time prepared an advertisement of the Belmont property for sale. Though there were circumstances which pressed with peculiar power upon her spirits at this time, she continued to discharge her duties with her wonted energy and cheerfulness, and so utterly unmindful of her own condition, and disregardful of what was necessary for her own health, that within a very short period of her death she spent two consecutive nights in watching by the bed-side of some pupils who were sick.

But the hour of her departure was at hand. Wasted and worn out in the service of her soul, the body by which it was enthralled was now to be laid aside. Willing as she was still to labour in the cause of her Redeemer, patience had accomplished its perfect work. The appointed time was come, at which she was to hear the glad announcement of "Well done, good and faithful servant! enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." The urgency of her cough, together with the feebleness of her frame, rendered it necessary to resort to remedies, the in-

fluence of which kept her slumbering, and thus prevented her from the expression of her feelings at this time. However consoling it might have been to listen to the unfoldings of the spirit just ready to enter upon its recompense of reward, there could be no necessity for any other testimony of her acceptance than that afforded by the fruits of the Spirit so long produced in her daily devotion to the service of her Lord; and with the simple declaration of the apostle, that it was "*far better to depart and be with Christ*," as her only but all-sufficient evidence of the prospect before her, she "rested from her labours."

The following letter, written by one who had been for years associated with her in those labours, and who partook largely of her affections, conveys the sad detail of the closing scene:

"She was in the first instance attacked by one of her usual bad colds, and kept her room for several days, and sent for the physician, who resorted to his usual remedy, a blister, which seemed to relieve her; and after three days of confinement she told us all that she was much better, and hoped soon to be down stairs. Her cough, however, was so violent on Wednesday, that she was quite exhausted by it, and appeared alarmingly weak. Miss I. and myself were sitting in her room about nine o'clock, when she called Miss I. to her and said she wished her to take my usual place by her side that

night. I accordingly went down stairs to sleep, but about three o'clock in the morning was roused, and hastened to the room. As I approached the foot of the bed, I heard her say, 'Gone! I am gone!' Mrs. M. replied, 'Do not say so, my darling sister.' Her answer was, '*I am not afraid to die; it is sweet to depart and be with Christ.*' We sent immediately for the physician, but it was too late. From four in the morning to about two P. M., she continued in a kind of stupor, only reviving now and then to take nourishment, and then calmly and gently breathed her last."

It were impossible, even were it attempted, for any pen to delineate the sad effect of the death of Miss Mercer, not only upon her immediate household and friends, but upon the neighbourhood she had so signally blessed. She found it, in a moral point of view, a wilderness, and by her labours it had been made truly to blossom as the rose. Where only ten short years before she had met with nothing but hostility to her plans, she now experienced no other feeling than love. Those who had resorted to every means in their power to thwart her efforts, impair her usefulness, and destroy her reputation, now mourned over her loss as that of a benefactor; and not only her sorrowing friends and bereaved pupils and companions in labour, but the whole population by which she was surrounded, assembled in the little church, which she had reared in their

midst by her own exertions, and to which she fondly looked as the means of perpetuating the influence she had laboured to establish among them, to pay a sorrowing tribute to her worth;—and there beneath its hallowed chancel rest her loved remains.

A funeral sermon was preached by the Rev. George Adie, who had been so long and so intimately associated with her in her efforts at usefulness, commemorative of her worth and the grief of her friends.

THE END.

# BETHUNE'S POEMS.

LINDSAY & BLAKISTON PUBLISH,

## LAYS OF LOVE AND FAITH,

WITH OTHER

## FUGITIVE POEMS.

BY THE

**REV. G. W. BETHUNE, D.D.**

This is an elegant Volume, beautifully printed on the finest and whitest paper, and richly bound in various styles.

As one arranges in a simple vase
A little store of unpretending flowers,
So gathered I some records of past hours,
And trust them, gentle reader, to thy grace,
Nor hope that in my pages thou wilt trace
The brilliant proof of high poetic powers;
But dear memorials of happy days,
When heaven shed blessings on my heart like showers,
Clothing with beauty e'en the desert place;
Till I, with thankful gladness in my looks,
Turned me to God, sweet nature, loving friends,
Christ's little children, well-worn ancient books,
The charm of Art, the rapture music sends;
And sang away the grief that on man's lot attends.

### OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

We beg leave to express our thanks to the diligent author of these Poems, for this additional and highly valuable contribution to the treasures of American literature. The prose writings of Dr. Bethune, by their remarkably pure and chaste language, their depth and clearness of thought, their force and beauty of illustration, and by their intelligent and elevated piety, have justly secured to him a place with the very best authors of our land, whose works are destined to exert a wide-spread and most salutary influence on the forming character and expanding mind of our growing republic. This volume of his collected poetry, though it be, as the author observes in his beautiful introductory sonnet, but the "gathered records of past hours," or the fruit of moments of industrious relaxation from more severe labours, may without fear take its place by the side of our best poetic productions; and there are many pieces in it, which, for accuracy of rhythm, for refined sentiment, energy of thought, flowing and lucid expression, and subduing pathos, are unsurpassed by any writer.

Exteriorly, and in the matters of paper and typography, this is an elegant volume, and so far is a fitting casket for the gems it contains—for gems these beautiful poems are, of "purest ray serene"—lustrous jewels—ornaments of purest virgin gold.

Many hallowed breathings will be found among the poems here collected—all distinguished by correct taste and refined feeling, rarely dazzling by gorgeous imagery, but always charming by their purity and truthfulness to nature.—*N. Y. Commercial.*

The author of this volume has a gifted mind, improved by extensive education; a cheerful temper, chastened by religion; a sound taste, refined and improved by extensive observation and much reading, and the gift of poetry.—*North American.*

The Volume before us contains much that is truly beautiful; many gems that sparkle with genius and feeling. They are imbued with the true spirit of poesy, and may be read again and again with pleasure.—*Inquirer.*

LINDSAY & BLAKISTON'S PUBLICATIONS.

# A BOOK FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN,

THE SECOND EDITION.

## MEMOIR OF MISS MARGARET MERCER.

**BY CASPAR MORRIS, M.D.**

A neat 18mo. volume, with a beautiful Engraved

PORTRAIT OF MISS MERCER,

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

Miss Mercer was a daughter of the late Governor Mercer, of Maryland. Her father, who was a Virginian, and the descendant of a distinguished family, removed to Strawberry Hill, near Annapolis, Md., soon after his marriage. In the memoir of the daughter, we have the moral portraiture of a character of great moral worth. Miss Mercer was a Christian, who earnestly sought to promote the glory of the Saviour, in persevering efforts to be useful in every position, and especially as a teacher of the young. Her energy of mind and elevated principles, united with humility and gentleness, and devoted piety, illustrated in her useful life, rendered her example worthy of a lasting memorial. The work is accompanied by numerous extracts from her correspondence.—*Christian Observer.*

The perusal of this Memoir will do good; it shows how much can be accomplished by superior talents, under the control of a heart imbued with love to the Saviour. The contemplation of the character of Miss Mercer may lead others to put forth similar efforts, and reap a like reward.—*Christian Chronicle.*

It is impossible to read this Memoir without the conviction that Miss Mercer was a very superior woman, both in her attainments and her entire self-consecration. In laying down the book, we feel alike admiration for the biographer and the subject of the Memoir.—*Presbyterian.*

WATSON'S NEW DICTIONARY OF POETICAL QUOTATIONS.

**A neat 12mo. Volume in plain and extra bindings.**

## A NEW DICTIONARY OF POETICAL QUOTATIONS,

CONSISTING OF ELEGANT EXTRACTS ON EVERY SUBJECT,

Compiled from various Authors, and arranged under appropriate heads,

**BY JOHN T. WATSON, M.D.**

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

We may safely recommend this book as a collection of some of the most beautiful conceptions, elegantly expressed, to be found in the range of English and American poetry.—*Saturday Courier.*

We regard this as the best book of a similar character yet published.—*Germantown Telegraph.*

In this Dictionary of Quotations every subject is touched upon; and, while the selection has been carefully made, it has the merit of containing the best thoughts of the Poets of our own day, which no other collection has.—*U. S. Gazette.*

The selections in this book are made with taste from all poets of note, and are classed under a great variety of subjects.—*Presbyterian.*

The Quotations appear to have been selected with great judgment and taste, by one well acquainted with whatever is most elegant and beautiful in the whole range of literature.—*Christian Observer.*